## YOUR WI-FI PROBLEMS – FIXED!

☑ Powerlines ☑ Hotspots ☑ Dual-band & more

Turn to page 62

ISSUE 599 | 10 – 23 FEBRUARY 2021

# Computer act!ve

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## Master the NEW KODI

Advanced tools you'll love – but is it better than PLEX? p40

# REMOVE ALL WINDOWS JUNK

p50

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## From the Editor

At one time, about four years ago, it felt like I was the only Surrey-to-London commuter not playing Candy Crush on their phone. I don't know what the few remaining commuters play now, but I still haven't crushed any candy – not on my phone, tablet, or computer. In fact, it was one of the first things I removed from the Windows Start menu once I realised it required just a few clicks.

Deleting such adverts (for that's what they are) is one of the tips Robert Irvine explains in our Cover Feature, along with expelling outdated Windows programs, wiping unnecessary updates and uninstalling temporary files that seem to have become permanent.

More controversially, he also suggests five Windows tools that you should replace. I agree with him on Groove Music and the Calendar app, but Skype? I have several relatives who still find it much easier to use than Zoom, as indeed I do. It'll stay on my desktop for a while longer. Please let me know if you agree.

**Daniel Booth**
**editor@computeractive.co.uk**

p62
p40
p50
p8
p60

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PLUS
DOES BT OWE YOU £500?
Millions in landline 'rip-off' – page 8

Should you...
STOP USING WHATSAPP?
Privacy fears cause mass exodus p60

## THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

**45**
Number of sounds on the Bose Sleepbuds to make you nod off – *p29*

**£500**
Compensation that might be paid to 'overcharged' BT customers – *p8*

**6 inches**
Distance you should keep iPhone 12s away from pacemakers – *p9*

## HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

# Contents

10 – 23 February 2021 • **Issue 599**

**6 News** 2021's first Feature update not coming until June

**10 Question of the Fortnight** Are smartphones the new washing machines?

**11 Protect Your Tech**
Covid-19 'vaccine bond' investments

**12 Letters**
What have you got against Google?

**14 Consumeractive** Can a firm refuse full refund because of Covid?

**16 Grow Your Family Tree**
Find Prisoner of War records

**18 Best Free Software**
Cosmonium 0.2.1

**21 Named & Shamed**
Junk Offender: Auslogics BoostSpeed

## Reviews

**22 HP Omen 25L**
PC for gamers bends all the rules

**23 Dell Inspiron 15 7000**
A hybrid that's more laptop than tablet

**24 Acer Aspire XC-895**
On-your-desktop PC comes out of the shadows

**25 Lenovo ThinkPad T14s AMD Gen 1**
Laptop means business at work and play

**26 Samsung Galaxy S21**
Latest Galaxy phone turns in a star performance

**28 Motorola Moto G9 Power**
Phone with big-screen staying power

**29 Bose Sleepbuds II**
Ear buds to give you sweet dreams

**30 Buy It/Competition**
Win a D-Link DIR-X1560 Wi-Fi 6 router

p10
Why phone upgrades just won't wash

Dell Inspiron 15 7000
p23
Computer active
RECOMMENDED
★★★★

Samsung Galaxy S21
p26
Computer active
BUY IT!
★★★★★

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## Workshops & Tips

**35 How to... Back up your files to an old computer**

**38 Make web extensions work when you browse anonymously**

**40 Master the new Kodi**

**42 Readers' Tips** Invert PDF colours so they're easier to read

**44 Phone and Tablet Tips**
Install any font on your iPhone or iPad

**46 Make Windows Better**
Stop Bluetooth revealing PC's name

**47 Make Office Better**
Resize images faster in Microsoft Word

**48 In the Club**
Share club info in a Google Drive folder

**49 What's All the Fuss About?**
Maia

**50 COVER FEATURE**
**Remove all Windows junk**
Banish bloatware, block ads and silence nagging messages for a smoother PC

**60 Should you stop using WhatsApp?**
With questions over the messaging service's privacy policy and links to Facebook, we suggest alternative options

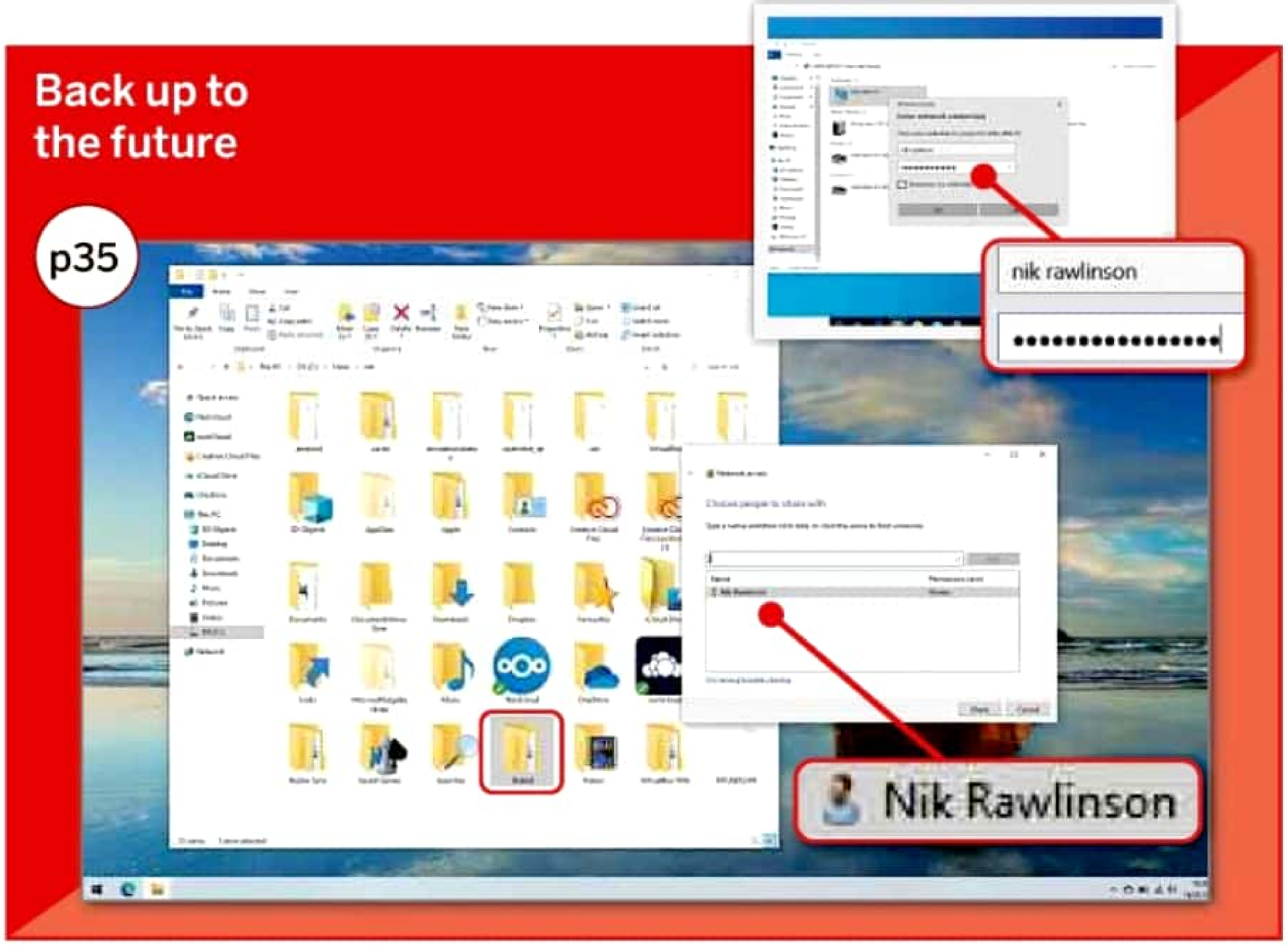
**62 Your Wi-Fi problems solved**
We resolve your difficulties with wireless home-network speeds

**64 Problems Solved**
Why can't I publish my manuscript?

**71 Reader Support**
Is FlightGear unsafe?

**72 Jargon Buster**

**74 Easy When You Know How**
Robert Irvine creates his own QR code


Back up to the future

p35

# REMOVE ALL WINDOWS JUNK

- ☑ Quarantined malware
- ☑ Annoying adverts
- ☑ Space-hogging files
- ☑ Unwanted software
- ✚ 'Junk' you must NEVER delete

COVER FEATURE P50

p60

Is WhatsApp sending the wrong message?

# News

The top stories in the world of technology

## 2021's first Feature update not coming until June

A leak from Microsoft has suggested that the first Windows 10 Feature update of 2021 (version 21H1) won't be ready until June, a month or two later than has been the case in previous years.

### WHAT WE THINK

We can't imagine many people minding that the next Feature update will arrive a little later than expected. On the contrary, most users will be thankful that they'll be able to enjoy their current version of Windows for a few more weeks before they have to press 'Update now' and hope for the best. But it does suggest that the autumn's update could be a biggie (technical term), with some of the biggest changes to Windows 10 since it launched in 2015 – perhaps significant enough to feel like a brand new operating system.

In both 2019 (version 1903) and 2020 (version 2004), the first Feature update was released in May. Before that, they were released in April.

But in an online message posted to software developers, a Microsoft employee referred to June 2021 as the release date for 21H1. The message was later edited to remove the date, but not before screenshots of it had circulated on social media.

It's thought that version 21H1 will be a minor update, containing mostly fixes and improvements to existing tools. Recent versions for Windows Insiders show small changes including DNS options moving from the Control Panel to Settings, and notifications when you turn on your computer telling you which programs will launch automatically.

JUNE
2021
M T W T F S S
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7 8 9 10 11 12 13
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28 29 30

A previous leak indicated that the update will be installed using an 'enablement switch', which turns on fixes and improvements already installed in monthly updates.

This is much faster than installing a new update in one go, and in theory it should cause fewer problems. The October 2020 update (20H2) was installed in the same way. It would be the first time Microsoft has released two minor updates for Windows 10 back to back.

If this happens, it's likely that the second Feature update of 2021 – expected in the autumn – will be a major update, adding new features.

Some experts think the reason Microsoft is waiting until the autumn is that it needs more time to work on a redesign of Windows 10.

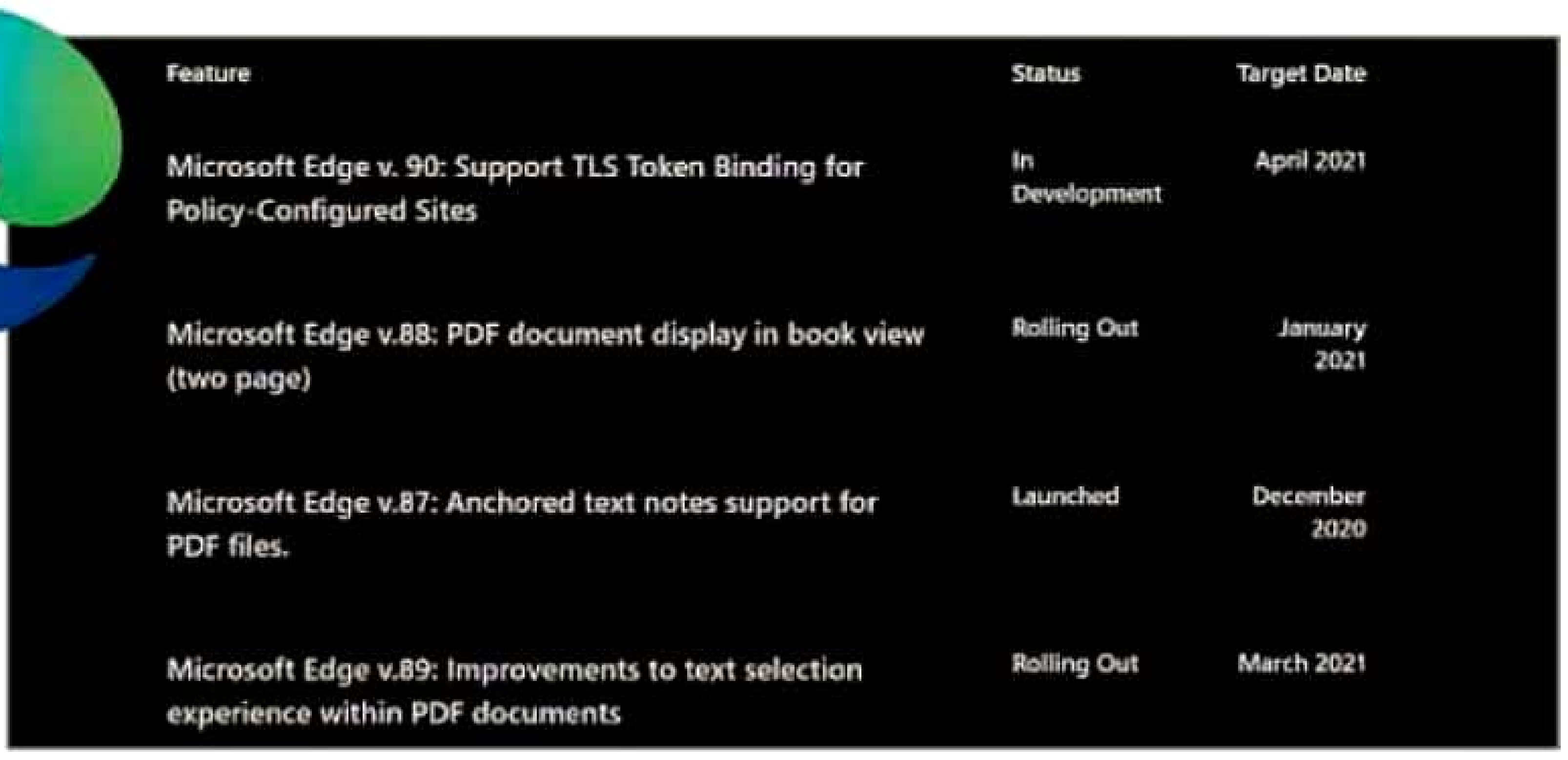
It marks a reversal of Microsoft's previous update schedule, in which major updates would be released in the spring, followed by a smaller update in the autumn.

## See upcoming Edge tools in Microsoft's new Roadmap

Microsoft has revealed a new site listing tools that are to be added to its Edge browser. Called the Feature Roadmap (www.snipca.com/37261, pictured), it lists what features are coming and the 'Target Date' when they're due to arrive in Edge.

It also gives the 'Status' of each feature, stating whether it's 'Launched' (available to all), 'Rolling Out' (the Beta version) or 'In Development' (test versions before Beta, such as Edge Canary).

Clicking a feature tells you more about it. For example, clicking the 'Additional page-scaling options' heading reveals that version 89 of Edge, due in March, will add more options ('Fit to page' and 'Actual size') when you print web pages.



| Feature | Status | Target Date |
|---|---|---|
| Microsoft Edge v. 90: Support TLS Token Binding for Policy-Configured Sites | In Development | April 2021 |
| Microsoft Edge v.88: PDF document display in book view (two page) | Rolling Out | January 2021 |
| Microsoft Edge v.87: Anchored text notes support for PDF files. | Launched | December 2020 |
| Microsoft Edge v.89: Improvements to text selection experience within PDF documents | Rolling Out | March 2021 |

You can search for features on the left-hand side, narrowing your results by clicking one of the categories and selecting your filter. One useful option is to search 'Last Updated' in periods of time, from 'Anytime' to the 'Past year'.

***You'll like this...*** Spotify has added nine classic novels as audiobooks, including *Great Expectations* (www.snipca.com/37258)

***but not this...*** Scammers are sending emails containing fake Sainsbury's giveaways (www.snipca.com/37259)

# Networks agree to build and share over 200 4G masts

O2
3
vodafone

O2, Three and Vodafone have agreed to build and share 222 phone masts to boost 4G coverage across rural parts of the UK.

Most of the masts (124) will be built in Scotland, with 54 in England, 33 in Wales and 11 in Northern Ireland. The locations of the masts aren't being revealed until planning permission has been granted. Construction will begin this year, and should be completed by 2024.

The announcement is the first stage of the Government's Shared Rural Network (SRN) scheme to help extend 4G signals to 95 per cent of the country by 2026.

It's being funded by £500m of public money from the Government and a further £500m from the networks, which will share existing masts as well as build new ones. According to Ofcom, around nine per cent of the UK's landmass currently lacks decent 4G coverage from any network.

However, the four nations will finish with different levels of 4G coverage. Scotland will see the biggest increase, with coverage rising from 42 per cent of the UK to at least 74 per cent.

Wales will see the second biggest increase, from 58 to 80 per cent. There will be smaller increases in England (81 to 90 per cent) and Northern Ireland (75 to 85 per cent).

When completed, each network will reach at least 90 per cent of the UK, resulting in a combined coverage of 95 per cent.

The SRN also aims to cover an additional 280,000 UK premises, 16,000km of roads and increase 'in car' coverage on around 45,000km of roads.

Matt Warman, UK Minister for Digital Infrastructure, said: "This new infrastructure will unlock the potential of rural communities in all four nations and offer greater choice of fast and reliable 4G services".

# 1 in 6 households struggle to afford broadband during lockdown

One in six households have found it difficult to afford broadband during the lockdowns, Citizens Advice has said.

The charity warned that many of society's poorest people are being "locked out" of access to key services online, such as applying for jobs and benefits and ordering medicine.

It wants the Government and Ofcom to make it compulsory for all providers to offer cheaper plans to people struggling financially.

Currently, only three of the 13 largest broadband providers – BT, Virgin Media and KCOM – offer special discounts for customers on low-income benefits, it said.

Alistair Cromwell, Acting Chief Executive of Citizens Advice, said: "The pandemic has cemented the fact that broadband is an essential utility. It is not a luxury for those who can afford it".

He added: "While the government has provided free laptops and mobile data to help children study at home, these are ultimately just a sticking plaster. To tackle the digital divide, it must take urgent action to ensure everyone can afford their broadband, no matter which provider they are with."

The survey comes two months after Ofcom research found that one in five households have cut back on clothes and food to afford broadband. Around 10 per cent of those struggling to pay decide to switch to a cheaper package, while many others simply miss payments.

Ofcom said it agrees that it's "vital" that companies provide affordable broadband, and that it's pushing all firms "to do more to support those in financial difficulty".

However, it added that without Government direction, it can't force companies to offer cheaper prices to those struggling to pay.

## IN BRIEF

**SCROLL FASTER IN ONLINE EXCEL**

Microsoft has improved the web version of Excel to make it faster to scroll rows in your spreadsheets. It also claims to have "significantly reduced" the time it takes to load a workbook, and to make it quicker to select the cells you need, so you'll enjoy "a more fluid experience when working in the grid". Read Microsoft's Excel blog to see these changes in action, and for more improvements: www.snipca.com/37224.

**PLAY OLD GAMES ON PLEX ARCADE**

Plex has launched a gaming service that lets you play 27 old Atari arcade games, including Missile Control, Lunar Lander and Centipede. Called Plex Arcade, it costs £3.99 a month after a seven-day trial. This price comes down to £2.29 if you subscribe to a Plex Pass, which itself costs £3.99 a month. It works on Windows and Mac only, not Linux. Sign up for the service at www.plex.tv/en-gb/arcade and read more on Plex's blog: www.snipca.com/37236.

## TOMORROW'S WORLD

Hong Kong firm Hanson Robotics says the pandemic world will need more robots to help people in shops and hotels – and it just so happens to have one in mind. Called Sophia (pictured), she's modelled on Queen Nefertiti, Audrey Hepburn and the wife of the company's founder, David Hanson. After years of development, they're now being mass produced for release in late 2021.

## IN BRIEF

**GIFFGAFF ADDS DATA TO GOODYBAGS**

Mobile network Giffgaff is boosting the data of its standard 4G package from 2GB to 3GB while keeping the price at £8 per month. It's also adding two new 5G 'golden goodybag' deals, priced £15 for 25GB and £20 for 100GB. However, it's increasing the cost of using data on its pay-as-you-go (PAYG) packages from 5p per MB (megabyte) to 10p.

**VODAFONE'S GIGACUBE CREATES 4G WI-FI**

Mobile network Vodafone has launched a new router that uses the company's 4G service to provide Wi-Fi in your home. It claims that the Gigacube B818 (pictured) can reach maximum speeds of 1.6Gbps download and 150Mbps upload, though in everyday use they'll be significantly less. Prices start from £30 a month for 100GB of data. Read more at www.vodafone.co.uk/gigacube.

## THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!

Would you take the risk to get the shot no one else would?🔥

Thirty years on from Sir Tim Berners-Lee's dream that the web would transform the world, we now have people setting up tripods so they can record themselves in cars parked on level crossings. The idiots in this car posted a video on social network TikTok boasting that they took the risk to get the shot "no one else would". The stunt, condemned by police as "staggeringly stupid", took place in Bolton, Lancashire.

# Overcharged for your BT landline? You could get £500

BT is facing a £600 million class-action lawsuit for allegedly failing to compensate elderly customers who were overcharged for landlines between 2009 and 2017.

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Taking action to protect consumers
You could be owed up to £500

If successful, the lawsuit could result in BT having to pay £500 to each of the 2.3 million customers affected.

In 2017, Ofcom said people who had a landline phone that wasn't part of a broadband or TV package were "getting poor value for money in a market that is not serving them well enough".

It found that although the wholesale costs of providing landlines to consumers had fallen by at least 25 per cent, landline providers had actually increased their fees by 28 to 41 per cent.

BT then cut the price of its landlines by £7 a month, but campaigners remain unhappy that customers have still not been compensated for having paid "excessive prices" between 2009 and April 2018.

"Ofcom made it very clear that BT had spent years overcharging landline customers, but did not order it to repay the money it made from this," said Justin Le Patourel, who founded Collective Action on Landlines (Call) to obtain compensation from BT for overcharged customers.

The group says that many of the affected customers are "older and from low-income brackets" and have been "penalised by BT for their long-standing loyalty".

BT said it "strongly disagrees" with the claim and intends to defend itself "vigorously" in court.

You'll be automatically added to the class action if from 2015 onwards you bought a BT landline without also adding broadband or TV.

Read more about the lawsuit at www.callclaim.co.uk, where you can also sign up for updates. The case will be presented by London law firm Mishcon de Reya.

# £940m given in free data during lockdowns

Broadband providers and mobile networks have given £940m worth of support, including free data, calls and texts, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A study by technology analysts Assembly Research examined 50 offers from companies and found that 20 of them – amounting to £340m in value – were directed at the most vulnerable people in society.

As well as free calls and texts, help has included scrapping data charges on essential websites, such as NHS pages and educational services.

Nineteen offers were available to everyone, coming to £250m, while six were targeted at NHS workers (£220m). Four offers (£130m) were aimed at helping small and medium-sized businesses survive the pandemic.

Assembly Research said that in "nearly every country" companies have taken measures to help people use data and access the internet during the pandemic, as well as let customers take longer to pay their bills.

It added that offers for healthcare workers have been common "in countries such as Australia, Spain, and Italy", while schemes to help children learn from home over the web have been set up in more than 10 other countries.

To see which offers are available during the latest lockdown, see page 6, Issue 598.

✉ Have you benefited from these offers? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

# Don’t use iPhone 12s near pacemakers, Apple warns

Apple has warned people with pacemakers not to use any iPhone 12 model too close to their chest because it contains magnets that may cause the medical device problems.

The company updated its support pages (www.snipca.com/37209) to say that the iPhone 12, which launched last November, should be kept “a safe distance” away from pacemakers and implanted defibrillators.

It defines a safe distance as more than six inches in normal use, and 12 inches when charging wirelessly. The advice applies to all four iPhone 12 models: standard, Pro, Pro Max and Mini.

Apple explains that the iPhone 12 contains more magnets than previous models in order to work with its MagSafe wireless charger, priced £39 (www.snipca.com/37211), which attaches to the back of the device (as pictured).

Both the magnets in the iPhone and the radios in the chargers emit electromagnetic fields that “might interfere with medical devices”.

It appears to have updated its advice in response to an article in Heart Rhythm Journal (www.snipca.com/37214) written by three US doctors who held an iPhone 12 near a patient’s implantable cardioverter defibrillator, which immediately went into a “suspended” state.

The doctors wrote: “We hereby bring an important public health issue concerning the newer generation iPhone 12 which can potentially inhibit lifesaving therapy in a patient particularly while carrying the phone in upper pockets”.

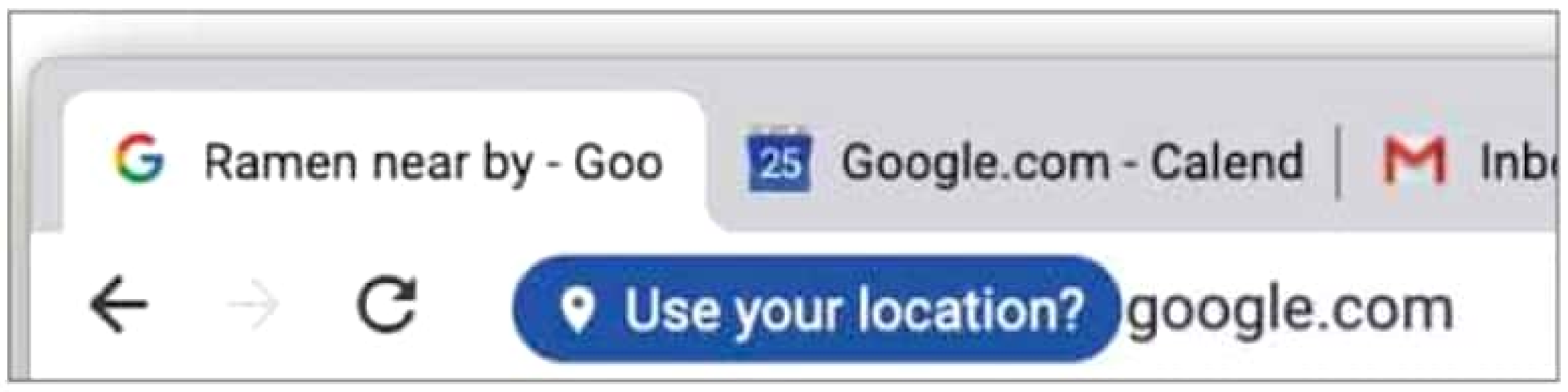
However, the test was conducted on just one patient, and didn’t show whether the result would’ve been the same with an iPhone that doesn’t work with MagSafe chargers.

Apple claims that the extra magnets in the iPhone 12 don’t mean it poses a greater risk of magnetic interference than earlier models. It says anyone worried should speak to their doctor and the manufacturer of their medical device for specific guidance.

# New Chrome shows smaller, less annoying alerts when browsing

Google has updated Chrome to show smaller and less annoying alerts when you browse the web, though you have to add the setting to turn them on.

To do this, type chrome://flags/#permission-chip into Chrome’s browser bar at the top of your screen to show ‘Permissions Chip Experiment’ highlighted at the top, then select Enabled in the dropdown menu on the right. Finally, click the Relaunch button that appears at the bottom right.



With this turned on, you’ll see these smaller alerts – which Google calls ‘permission chips’ - appear to the left of the URL in your browser bar (it’s the ‘Use your location?’ message in our screenshot). After a few seconds the message changes to a small icon. These new alerts are much less intrusive than the normal alerts that typically appear at the top right of your screen as you browse.

They’re part of Chrome 88, which Google launched in late January. The new version also extended Chrome’s dark mode to the scroll bars in its Settings, Bookmarks and History sections, as well as many others.

In addition, Chrome 88 ends all support for the Flash plug-in, which its makers Adobe stopped developing at the end of 2020. The new version also stops working with the File Transfer Protocol (FTP) system, which is a long-standing method for sending files between two computers over the internet. However, FTP doesn’t work with encrypted connections, allowing hackers to modify files you’re sending.

## IN BRIEF

### NETFLIX AUDIO BETTER ON PHONES & TABLETS

Netflix has updated its audio to make programmes sound better when you’re watching on Android phones and tablets. It has upgraded the xHE-AAC codec to make audio clearer in “noisy environments” and work better with mobile connections. It also makes the volume consistent between shows. However, these tweaks apply only to devices running Android 9 (released in 2018) or later. Read more at www.snipca.com/37204.

### VIRGIN LAUNCHES 5G IN 100 TOWNS & CITIES

Virgin Mobile has launched its 5G service in more than 100 towns and cities across the UK using Vodafone’s mobile network. Virgin customers with 5G plans and phones will be moved immediately on to the Vodafone network, while 4G customers will remain on EE until Virgin’s deal with EE’s parent company BT ends in late 2021. Visit Virgin’s site for more details (www.snipca.com/37205) and see the full list of locations at www.snipca.com/37206.

### FACEBOOK NEWS ARRIVES IN THE UK

Facebook has launched its News feature in the UK, letting you follow a mix of major stories from newspapers and broadcasters, and “personalised” news selected for you based on your interests. The feature appears as a tab in Facebook’s mobile app (see screenshot). Tap the three horizontal lines top right to see it. Read more at www.facebook.com/news.

# Question of the Fortnight

## Are smartphones the new washing machines?

### Customers are holding on to their devices for longer

### THE FACTS

- A third of phone users say they'll hang on to their devices for longer before upgrading
- Analysts say phones are now like white goods because more customers upgrade only when their device is broken
- Apple supports some phones for six years, while Samsung supports some Android phones for three years

You often hear talk that we live in a throwaway society, with people casually discarding devices when shiny new replacements go on sale. But there's evidence that this attitude is changing, as customers become keener to make their gadgets last longer.

A recent survey from industry analysts CCS Insight found that just over a third of UK customers say they'll hang on to their phones for longer than their previous models. Only 17 per cent of respondents said they plan to upgrade sooner than they did before.

The results support the idea that customers are treating phones like they do white goods, such as washing machines, fridges and ovens: they're waiting until phones break before upgrading, not simply because there's a new model available.

> “People are waiting until phones break before upgrading, not simply because there's a new model available”

Some analysts now think that on average customers wait four years before upgrading. Customers have been nudged in this direction by the phone manufacturers, with Apple leading the way. In recent years it has started to support devices for longer. It still, for example, provides security updates for the first version of the iPhone SE (released in 2016, pictured below) and iPhone 6s (2015). That may not seem long in the lifetime of your average kitchen appliance, but it's an eternity for phones.

Apple may even have been too successful in this policy. In early 2019, boss Tim Cook blamed users not upgrading for iPhone sales falling by 15 per cent.

Android phones don't last as long, but even here there are signs of improvement, with more manufacturers pledging to deliver updates for longer. It helps that Samsung, by far the world's biggest Android manufacturer, has promised three years of updates for its Galaxy phones released in 2019 and 2020.

Now, we don't expect that news to make you skip euphorically around your living room. After all, three years is the *minimum* you'd expect a device to last. It's indicative of how frequently manufacturers release new phones that keeping them updated for three years is seen as an achievement.

However, longer support isn't the only reason customers are holding on to their phones. The other main factor is that the technological leaps made by previous phones have shrunk to baby steps.

At the start of the 2010s each fresh generation of phone broke new ground, whether by offering screens with higher resolution or using more powerful processors to speed up how they work. That period of rapid innovation has now ended, leaving manufacturers struggling to find new features exciting enough to make customers splash out. New phones just don't create the same buzz they did 10 to 15 years ago, when the sight of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs holding one aloft was enough to trigger a media frenzy.

In any case, not everyone needs their phone to be capable of carrying out the most advanced tasks. If all you want is something to make calls and check emails, with some web browsing on the side, the iPhone 6s isn't much worse than last year's iPhone 12.

The pandemic may accelerate the trend. With money tight and unemployment set to rocket, people are bound to prioritise more essential purchases.

Covid has also changed *how* people buy phones – moving from the locked-down high street to websites. Almost two-thirds of customers now say they prefer to buy online, up from 36 per cent in 2019.

But however people buy phones, they're doing so less often. It's not quite ‘make do and mend’, but the throwaway age seems to be over.

# Protect **your tech**

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

**WATCH OUT FOR...**

## Covid-19 'vaccine bond' investments

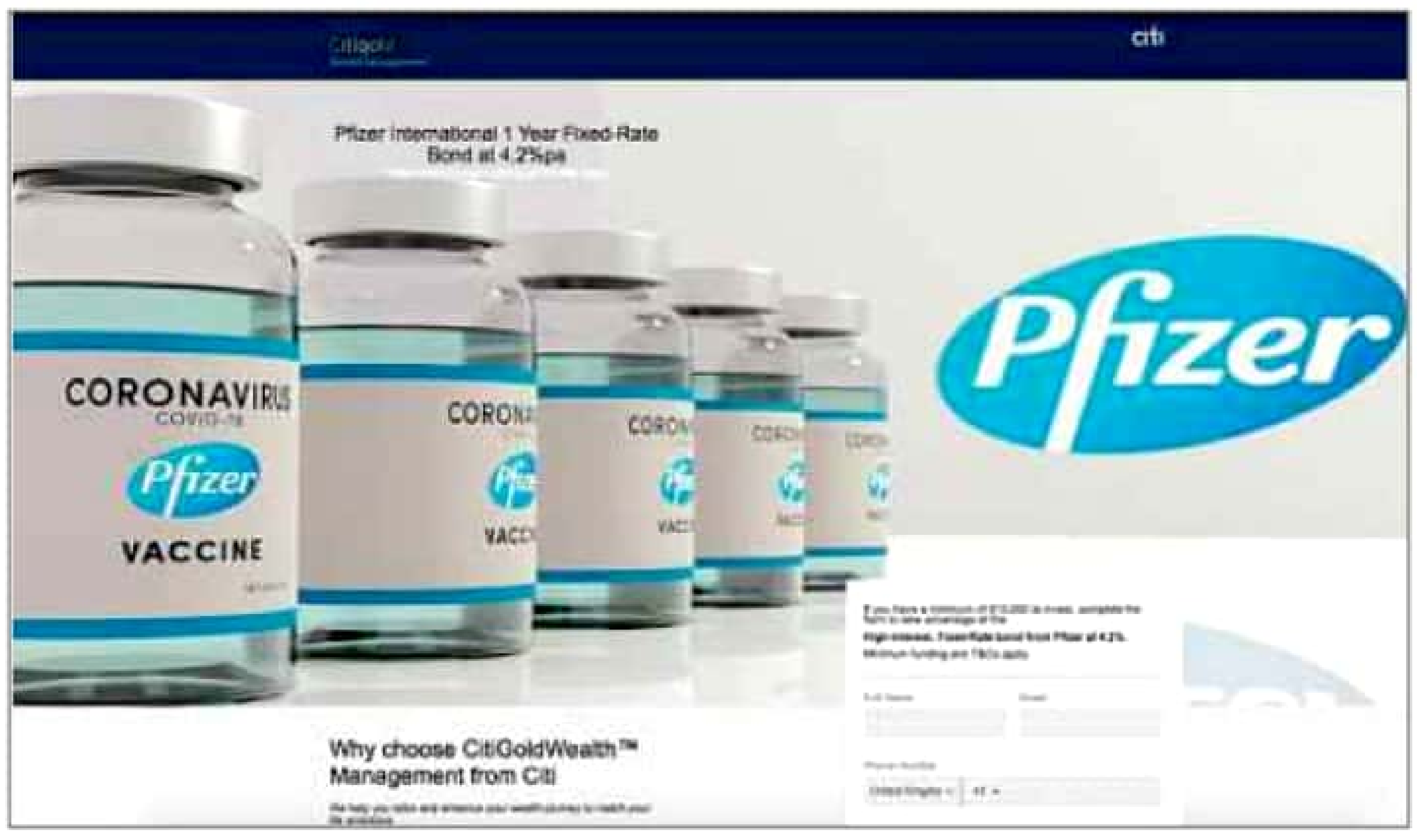
### What's the threat?

Fraudsters have found yet another way to exploit the coronavirus pandemic – by promoting fake 'vaccine bonds' as investments. Intended victims have reported receiving emails asking them to invest their savings in a bond from Pfizer, who with BioNTech made the first Covid-19 vaccine to be approved.

The emails contain adverts (pictured) that claim the one-year fixed-rate bonds, supposedly run by US bank Citigroup, promise a return of 4.2 per cent on a minimum investment of £10,000.

When you hand over your money, you're asked for personal data including your telephone number. You also have to upload a copy of your passport or driving licence for "anti-money laundering" purposes.

Pfizer has confirmed that it has no links to the bonds, and warned people to look out for other scams using its name, including fake vaccines.



Pfizer International 1 Year Fixed-Rate Bond at 4.2%pa

Why choose CitiGoldWealth™ Management from Citi

### How can you stay safe?

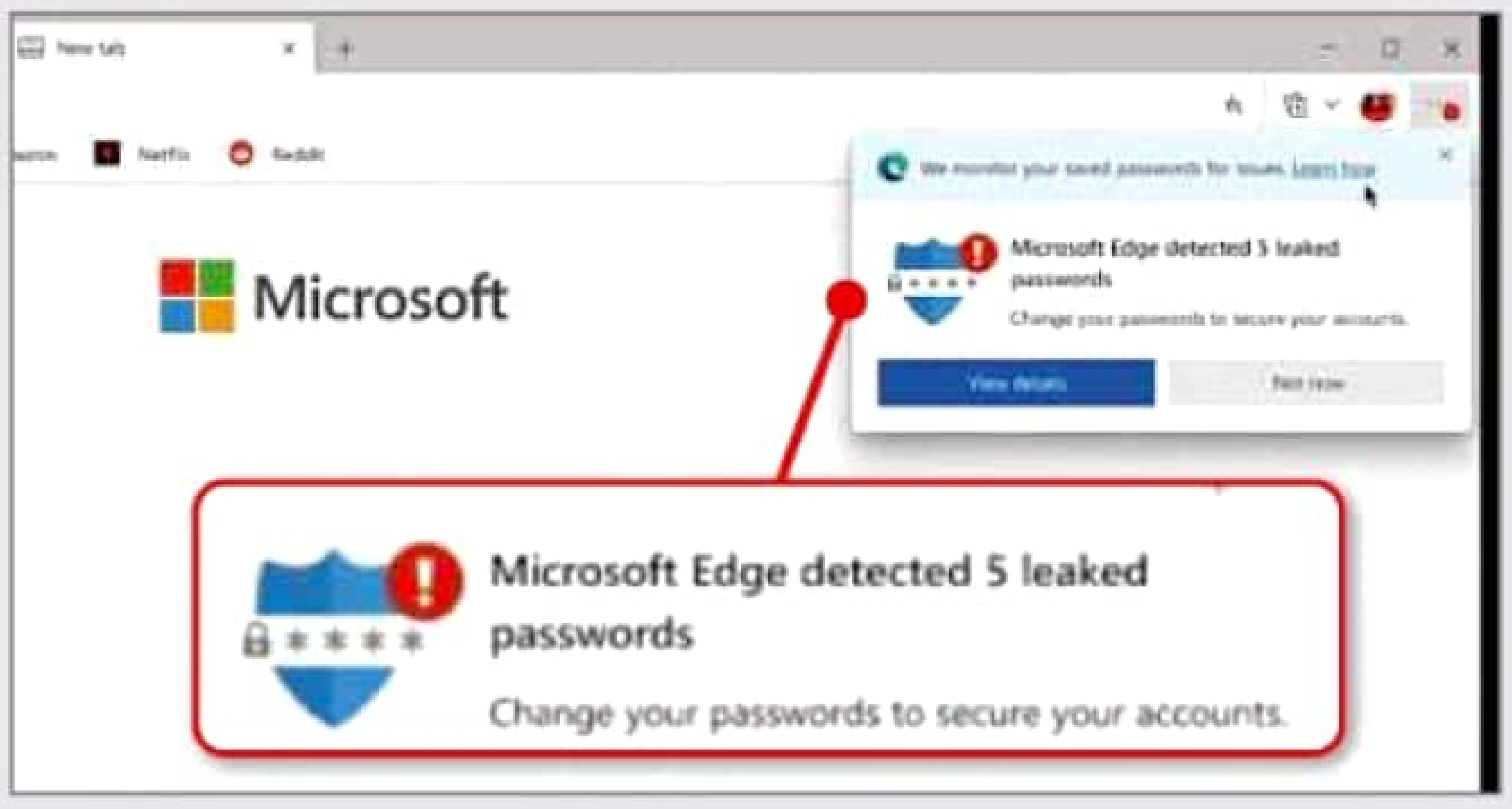
On a general level, remain suspicious of any message about the coronavirus that doesn't come from the NHS or Government. Scammers are treating this pandemic as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to swindle a confused and anxious public, and will continue to come up with new scams for as long as the virus remains a serious threat.

More specifically, you can avoid emails for fake investment schemes by not signing up for information on them on bogus comparison websites. This is how the scammers get your email address in the first place. Their adverts appear on Google when you search for investment information. One click later and you're entering your email in the hope of "guaranteed returns".

Google's rules ban these ads, but scammers will always seek ways to get around them. Consumer campaigner Mark Taber says he's given the Financial Conduct Authority more than 600 examples of investment scams advertised on Google. The message is clear: be extremely careful when researching investments on the internet.

## **New** tools | Microsoft Edge's Password Monitor

In its blog post announcing version 88 of Edge (www.snipca.com/37191), Microsoft says that using a weak password is a terrible idea because "bad actors" can guess them and access your accounts. This doesn't mean that the cast of *EastEnders* want to hack you. In tech jargon, a bad actor is simply someone with criminal intent – typically a hacker or scammer. But the point remains true: using 12345678 as your password is a worse idea than asking Dot Cotton to keep a secret.



We monitor your saved passwords for issues. Learn how

Microsoft Edge detected 5 leaked passwords

Change your passwords to secure your accounts.

To help you stay safe, the new version of Edge has a tool called Password Monitor that tells you when a password you've saved in the browser has been leaked online in a data breach. When this happens (as it inevitably will), you'll see a warning at the top right of your screen (see screenshot). Click 'View details' to see which password it is, and to change it.

Password Monitor is switched on by default, so you don't need to turn on any settings to activate it.

## **Scam**Watch

**Readers warn readers**

### Not difficult to spot 'amaozn' scam

In January I received an email claiming to be from Amazon with the subject line 'Purchase Receipt (Thank you for your purchase!)'. It told me my delivery of a mini PC was in process and that the order couldn't be changed. I had ordered no such item, of course. The scammers hoped I would ring a US number (+1 800 872-6041) to confirm that I hadn't bought this PC. It was obviously a scam – a slight giveaway was that the sender was 'amaozn order' and their address was **amazonorder056@gmail.com**.

Anne-Marie Nicol

Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk

# Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

## Google is better the devil I know

As a dedicated user of Google's products, I'm afraid Issue 597's Cover Feature ('Stop Using Google') simply proved the old adage that there's no such thing as a free lunch. My brilliantly simple Chromebook delivers all the services that the average owner of a Windows laptop needs without the high cost, slow startup, viruses and interminable updates. The idea that I should replace Google's rich ecosystem with a rag-bag of free and paid-for accounts with alternative providers is frankly risible. Better the devil I know.

The feature I'm waiting for is 'Stop Using Microsoft'. I recently found out the hard way that you cannot install Windows without a Microsoft account and continual nagging to sign in so that you can be tracked for advertising on a product you've paid for. And while Office is an unrivalled product, I won't buy Office 365 since the time I had to use it for a presentation in a venue with no Wi-Fi and PowerPoint popped up a message to say that some of its features were disabled because it could not authenticate its licence.

**Roger Wood**

## Was 'Stop Using Google' your best ever issue?

I've been reading *Computeractive* almost since it began, and I can't recall enjoying a feature more than 'Stop Using Google'. For years I've despaired at how Google's influence has slowly stifled all the alternatives. I first noticed it when people started to use 'Google' as a verb – as in, 'to Google' something online. Why are we so relaxed about this dominance? We wouldn't accept Sky News having the same level of influence in news broadcasting, or the *Daily Mail* in the world of newspaper publishing.

Thanks to your issue, I've switched from Google Search to DuckDuckGo, from Gmail to ProtonMail, and from Google Maps to OpenStreetMap. I hope others do the same and break Google's stranglehold.

**Peter Austin**

I started to use DuckDuckGo recently because I found that a lot of the stuff I had searched for in Google started to appear in my social-media ad space and it felt invasive.

Any tool I use is a matter of choice, preference and ease of use. I will use Google again, but you make some fair points representative of your opinion at the time of writing; when you change your stance, or things improve in your opinion, you can write again and tell us what you think in the next article.

**Paddy Mulcahy**

**CA SAYS** **Peter and Paddy aren't the only ones to have switched to DuckDuckGo recently – our own Will Stapley has also. Turn to page 20 to see why.**

Don't buy the wrong type of SSD

## New SSD has revamped my 13-year-old laptop

Having read your feature 'Don't Buy the Wrong Type of SSD' in Issue 597 (page 62, pictured above right), I decided to upgrade a 13-year-old Compaq laptop that's rather slow. I bought the appropriate Crucial SSD and a SATA drive enclosure with connecting cable, then connected the new SSD to the laptop and cloned the hard drive on it using AOMEI Backupper (www.aomeitech.com). Next, I replaced the hard drive with the SSD and successfully booted up the laptop. It now boots up and shuts down in less than half the time it used to, while apps start in a fraction of the time. I have put the old hard drive in the SATA enclosure and will use it as a backup drive.

I wonder how many more years I can get out of the laptop? There must be many old machines lying about that could be upgraded and put to good use in these strange times.

**Alex Dickson**

## Older people need faster broadband too!

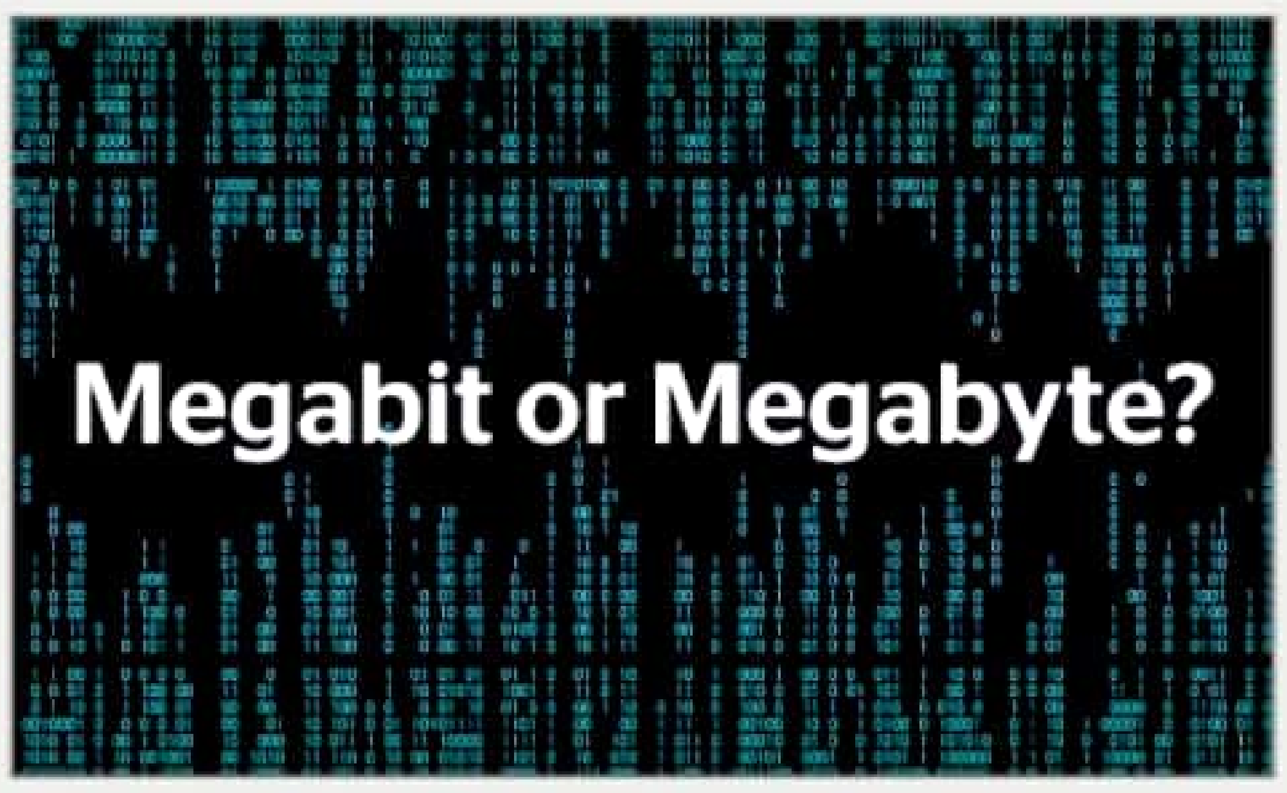
I totally disagree with Ralph Stephens (Star Letter, Issue 598) that elderly people don't need speeds faster than 30Mbps. My wife and I are in our Seventies and we both require a download speed of 200Mbps. My latest speed test showed that we get 158Mbps downloading and 20Mbps uploading.

Most of our friends in the same age band have the same speed and we also drive on the motorways (Ralph said that giving older people fast broadband is like offering them motorways when all they

## I'm in a (mega)bit of a muddle

As a subscriber, I often look at your Jargon Buster (page 72) to keep up with modern trends. It does surprise me that you don't show any mention of megabytes and megabits. Being 78, the only way I can remember the difference is to know that there are eight bits to a byte, so a quoted speed of say 32 megabits per second is four megabytes per second.

**David Hanken**


Megabit or Megabyte?

**CA SAYS** **There's no doubt that many people get confused by the two terms, and it can take a while to learn a rule of thumb that distinguishes them. It's why we chose the terms as the focus of our first 'What's the Difference Between?' box back in Issue 504 (June 2017).**

**At the time we said that "like most of the industry we use 'Mbps' to denote 'megabits per second', and 'MB/s' for 'megabytes per second'" – and that hasn't changed. We pointed out that MB/s is "generally used when referring to memory or disk-transfer speeds, as these devices work much quicker than broadband". We added that the convention is to refer to broadband speeds in Mbps, even though they're "actually fast enough to be usefully measured in MB/s". A 300Mbps connection is 37.5MB/s, for example.**

need are B roads). Cars are not just for driving to the shops and back, and nor – figuratively speaking – are computers, which I've been using since 1980 (possibly before he was born!).

**Michael Jones**

## What's the issue?

As a long-time subscriber to *Computeractive*, I've often hoped you'd add issue numbers to the bottom of your pages. I sometimes rip out useful features to refer to later, but these only have the date on, not the issue number. This is a problem because you frequently refer to past issues by their number, not their date. I'm then left guessing which date refers to which issue number. Any chance you could add issue numbers alongside the date?

**David Pickford**

**CA SAYS** **Ask and you shall receive - look at the bottom of this page and you'll see we've added the issue number. We hope it will help David and others find the advice they need in old issues. You can also search past issues – and print features from them - on our Back Issue CDs. The 2020 edition is available now:** www.snipca.com/37026.

## Digging up Bitcoin hard drive is 'publicity stunt'

I can't believe the nerve of James Howells asking his local council to dig up a landfill pit to find his hard drive (News, Issue 598, page 7). It's not his council's fault that he forgot it contained so many Bitcoins. Any sympathy I would've had for him vanished when I read his pledge to hand over £52m to a Covid-relief fund. That just smacks of a crude and desperate publicity stunt.

As the council says, why should it excavate the landfill when there's no guarantee of success? And who's to say that the value of Bitcoin will last anyway? That supposed £52m might shrivel to 52p within a few months.

**Sheila Rowbotham**

## 16:9 aspect ratio is all down to cost

Regarding the recent debate on the 16:9 aspect ratio, let's get real. The reason computer users have been lumbered with this format, which is suboptimal for almost everything bar watching widescreen movies, is cost. Screens are measured diagonally and for a given diagonal a 16:9 format has just over 89 per cent of the area of a 4:3 screen. In the case of laptops or tablets this also means the chassis can be smaller and cheaper.

As a result we all have to spend more time scrolling when doing serious work than used to be the case. Even in portrait mode 16:9 is a pain because it isn't wide enough. And please don't get me started on those who try to show a picture taken with an ultra-wide camera in portrait mode on a 16:9 screen with vast areas of blurred who-knows-what to fill the vacant space.

**Lawrence Harding**

## Couriers still leave items where they can be stolen

When I read Consumeractive cases about items not delivered, it worries me that couriers consider it acceptable to leave a parcel on a doorstep, where it's visible from the road and exposed to the elements.

I had a similar experience to Debbie Chance (Consumeractive, Issue 594, page 15). We were at home but the Hermes courier failed to ring the doorbell or knock on the door. The first I knew about the delivery was a couple of hours later when I received an email showing a photo of the parcel on the doorstep. Unless the photograph also shows the resident at the door, it's not sufficient proof of delivery as the parcel could have been stolen.

In my experience only Royal Mail acts consistently by leaving a card if they get no response, and taking the parcel back to the depot.

**David Bickell**

## STAR LETTER

## What have you got against Google?

I'm writing to complain against the obvious bias you have demonstrated against Google – a company that supplies excellent software and which in my opinion offers good value.

Computer
active
STOP
USING
Google
Switch NOW to tools that are better, 100% private and won't rip you off
DON'T BUY THE WRONG SSD
PLEX

In my case as a not-for-profit company, I couldn't do without Google Suite. It has enabled me, without systems training, to develop a suite of business systems covering accounts, client communications and more – and it's all free! I certainly don't feel ripped off, as the cover of Issue 597 ('Stop Using Google', pictured) declares.

I detected your dislike for Google some six months ago, when I first wrote to you about it. In November, I followed your advice to try Microsoft Edge and found it to be only slightly faster. I reverted to Chrome when I realised that Edge lacked some add-ons for Google Sheets.

I have a suspicion that you've not yet faced up to the advantages of online apps and storage. The negatives of Google are minor and can always be obviated. I could give you many examples of things you can do in Google's services that just can't be done on PCs using Microsoft or open-source alternatives.

I haven't switched off location tracking as you advise as the adverts help me find local suppliers or services. If at all inconvenienced I can always go incognito. I rest my case. I'm asking that you publish views different to your own.

**Mervyn Thomas**

**CA SAYS** **We're more than happy to publish opinions that differ from our own – so much so in fact that we've made this Star Letter. Mervyn makes a strong case for Google, and we accept a lot of his points. As we said in the feature, Google continues to make brilliant products. But many people are increasingly angry about the company's business practices and privacy policies, while many simply want to know what alternatives there are to what increasingly feels like a monopoly. It's a debate that has divided readers, as you'll see from the other letters we've published here.**

The **Star Letter** writer wins a **Computeractive** mug!

# Consumer**active**

We stand up for your legal rights

LEAD CASE

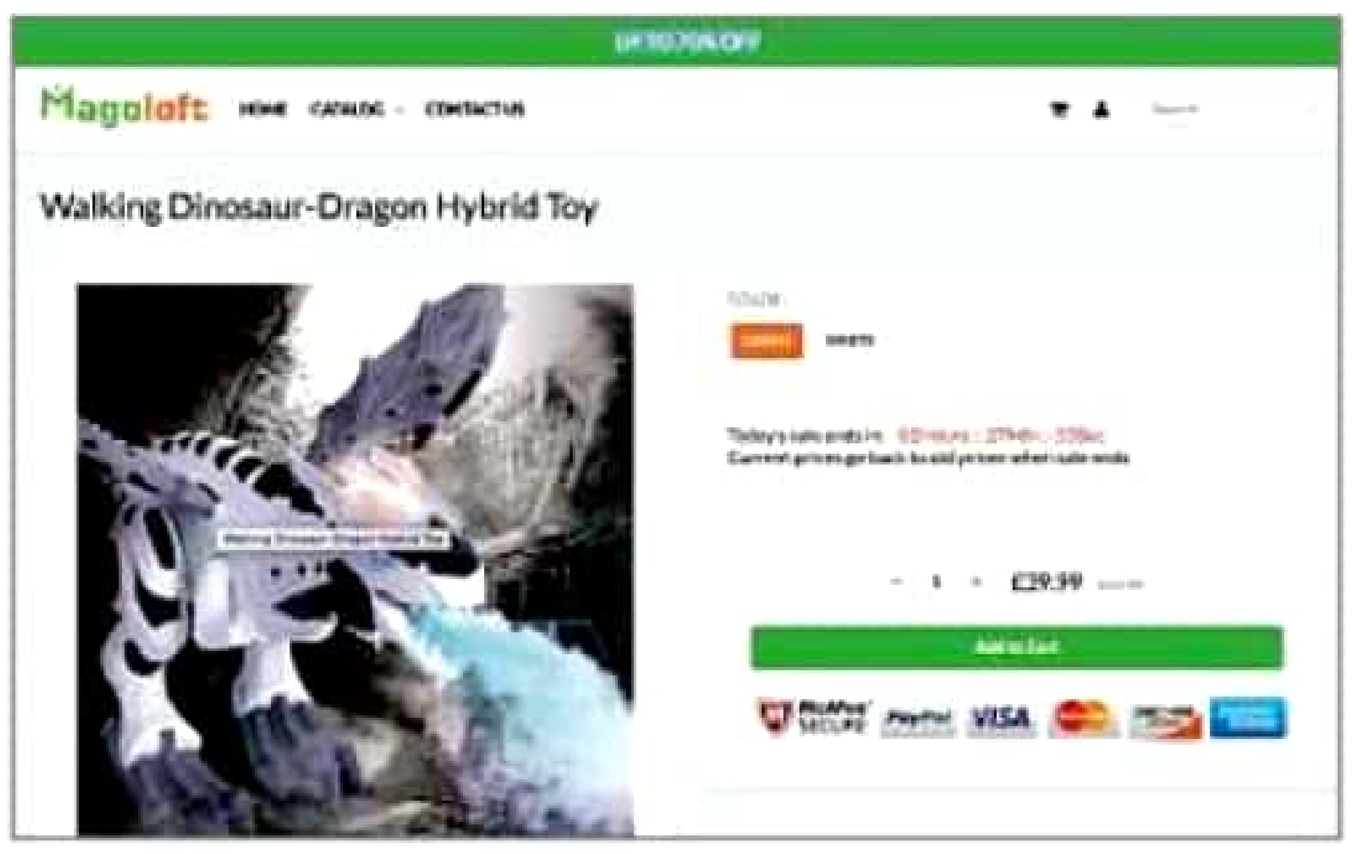
## Can a firm refuse full refund because of Covid?

**Q** I bought a dinosaur-dragon toy for £44.98 from Magoloft (www.magoloft.com, pictured) for my granddaughter, paying by Mastercard, but it doesn't work. The site initially offered half my money back, not a full refund. The reason it gave was that it's not accepting returns because of the pandemic, and therefore couldn't check whether the toy was faulty. I refused this offer, and now the site won't reply. Can they use Covid as an excuse?

**John Taylor**

**A** No they can't. Yes, the pandemic is affecting all companies, big and small, and some deliveries or refunds may take longer, but that doesn't mean websites can refuse to take returns.

Magaloft's excuse made us suspicious, so we investigated and found that although it has an Essex address, it's actually run by a company called Labubu Limited owned by Yeuping Song, who lives in China. Labubu itself is registered as a UK company, but perhaps Mr Song's distance from these shores means he's not familiar enough with our laws.



Walking Dinosaur-Dragon Hybrid Toy

So, for his benefit and any other company boss struggling with basic consumer rights, here's a reminder: no matter where they're based, any firm that targets UK consumers must abide by UK law. We've emailed Magaloft to point this out, and asked it to give John a full refund.

If it ignores this, John could try to get a refund through Mastercard. The toy was cheaper than £100, so he's not covered by Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act, but Mastercard has been known to make refunds for smaller amounts as goodwill gestures. He should also contact Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice site: www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

**CASE ONGOING**

## Has Apple stolen my money?

**Q** When my iPad cable became faulty, Apple promised to send a replacement as long as I gave it my card details and returned the faulty one. Apple sent the wrong cable, which was returned, and I got a replacement at an Apple store. However, that didn't stop Apple charging me and it's never refunded me. Isn't this theft?

**Ellen Goudsmit**

**A** It certainly counts as rotten customer service, but it's unlikely to be considered theft. The Theft Act 1968 says: "A person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it". Property includes money and theft and can be for the thief's personal enrichment or someone else's.

It's hard to believe that Apple's staff had no intention of refunding Ellen, so it's probably guilty instead of basic incompetence. Happily, her bank says it will replace the money. It's unlikely to let the matter go and is bound to tackle Apple to recover the money. If it hadn't, Ellen could have filed a case against Apple in the small claims court.

**CASE CLOSED**

**CASE UPDATE**

## Don't refuse delivery if you want PayPal refund

Finally, we have some positive news about a case against PayPal, though it took longer to resolve than it should have. Back in Issue 578, published last April, we explained how PayPal had refused Ronald Hemes a refund for a poorly made model of the Space Shuttle he bought from a Chinese website. Its initial reason was that the item had been sent to Ronald – something he didn't dispute. His point was that the model wasn't as described, and so he refused delivery from the courier and assumed he'd be entitled to the full refund of £20.60. As with many cases against PayPal in the past few months, we couldn't understand why it had dismissed his case.

After months of chasing, PayPal told us the case had been resolved, but said its data-protection policy meant it wouldn't go into detail. So we spoke to Ronald, who was more forthcoming. He told us that PayPal has refunded him in full, though it claimed this was a goodwill gesture, rather than something it had to do by law.

It appears that if you want a refund under PayPal's Buyer Protection scheme, you have to accept an item when it's delivered then return it to the seller using an address PayPal provides. Rejecting it at the doorstep means you won't be covered because the item might not get sent back to the official returns address PayPal has for the company.

Now we know this, we can update our advice to readers. We just wish PayPal would make this clearer to both buyers and sellers.

Contact us so we can investigate your case

**Email:** consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk
Please include your name, phone number and address.

# How can I prove I didn't break Lenovo laptop?

**Q** I bought a Lenovo laptop from Laptops Direct (www.laptopsdirect.co.uk) last March, and eight months later the hinges broke. Laptops Direct keeps pushing me to have it fixed under Lenovo's warranty, but Lenovo says I damaged the laptop myself, meaning I'm not covered. What should I do?

**Peter Webster**

**A** Peter will have to prove that the hinges broke because of an inherent fault with the laptop, which means paying for it to be inspected by independent technicians. If a fault is found, Peter should tell Laptops Direct (not Lenovo) because as the retailer it is responsible for fixing problems. If it accepts the fault was inherent, it will have to refund Peter the cost of the inspection. It will also need to replace or repair the laptop, or refund him.

If Peter doesn't want to pay for an inspection, he could try gathering evidence online to see if others have had problems with the laptop, then show this to Laptops Direct. If it refuses to listen, Peter could use this evidence in the small claims court. Reviews from consumers are classified as "hearsay" under law, but judges can still consider them when ruling on a case as long as the person providing the comment "would've been a competent witness if called in person and not too young, of unsound mind, or it could be shown they have a lack understanding".

Should he proceed to small claims, he'll be asked whether he wants to have the case assessed by a mediator. We'd advise Peter to agree to this because it could go in his favour without him needing to go to court.

**CASE ONGOING**

# Am I running out of time to reject goods?

**Q** By mistake I ordered a Humax FVP-5000T Freeview TV recorder (pictured) from Currys for £194.99, but can't seem to cancel my order. I did everything Currys requested, including filling in a returns form, but haven't got a response from the company. If I don't get it sorted soon, will I lose my rights to reject it within the required 14 days after purchase?

**Bill Barrington**

**A** We're happy to say that Bill got a refund from Currys soon after emailing us, but he needn't have worried about losing his rights. Bill told Currys he was rejecting the recorder within 14 days of receiving it, which is his right under the Consumer Contract Regulations. From that point, he had a further 14 days to return the recorder to Currys and wait for a refund. It wasn't his fault that Currys made it hard for him to return the item, nor that it ignored his emails.

Bill couldn't have taken the recorder back in person because Currys stores were closed due to lockdown. In the end though, he didn't have to return the item. Currys picked it up as a goodwill gesture, saving him postage costs – he would normally have had to pay these because the recorder was an unwanted (ie, rejected) item, not faulty.

Currys

**CASE CLOSED**

**CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE**

## Site waived cost after late battery delivery

In late November I placed an order with LED Hut (https://ledhut.co.uk, pictured) for AA and AAA batteries, and my credit card was charged £30.86. After a week without delivery, I tried to trace the order but the courier did not recognise the tracking number.

I notified the site, who said the batteries had been dispatched on the order date but the courier was having problems with the tracking page. After 20 days without delivery I told the site to cancel the order and refund my card. However on day 22 the batteries arrived, so I told LED Hut that I'd accepted the late delivery and instructed them to charge my card. They immediately replied saying I could keep them without payment for the inconvenience. I hadn't expected that – well done LET Hut.

**Bryan Unitt-Jones**

Has a company impressed you with its customer service? Please let us know: editor@computeractive.co.uk

LEDHUT
DURACELL
LONG LASTING POWER
MN21
Energizer

**Contact**
LED Hut
- **Phone** 0330 053 7169
- **Email** support@ledhut.co.uk

# Grow Your Family Tree

Were your ancestors captured during the two world wars? **Nick Peers** reveals how to...

## Find Prisoner of War records

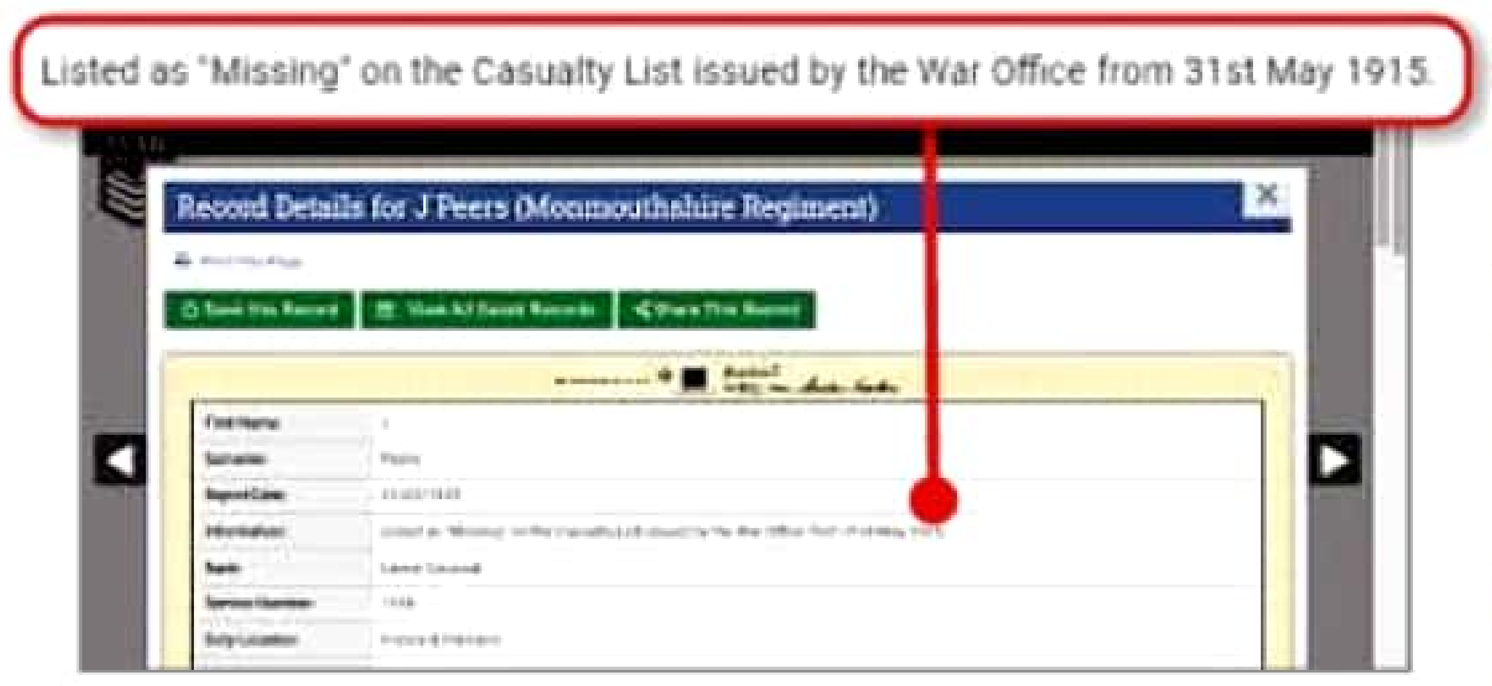
### Search World War One records

The National Archives (TNA) provides an excellent introductory guide to Prisoner of War (PoW) records available online (www.snipca.com/37146). Once you've digested this, it's time to start searching them.

Many records were kept by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has digitised index cards for prisoners – you can search this list for free at https://grandeguerre.icrc.org. Enter their surname, select their nationality and status (military), then click Search.

The list isn't comprehensive – it doesn't, for example, include my great-granduncle Joseph Peers, who served in the Monmouthshire Regiment during World War One. You should also search Find My Past's 'Prisoners Of War 1715-1945' collection (www.snipca.com/37151 – you'll need a Plus subscription costing £12.99 for one month to view records). This contains several different record sets from World War One, so your ancestor may appear more than once.

Type their name into the top two search boxes and you'll instantly see a 'View XX Results' button appear indicating how many potential matches there are. If necessary, use the other options, such as service number, rank or regiment, to narrow the search.



Listed as "Missing" on the Casualty List issued by the War Office from 31st May 1915.

Nick found out on Forces War Records the date his great-granduncle was captured by German forces

Joseph Peers was captured at Ypres in 1915 and appears in two German prisoner lists from June of that year, the first indicating he was in a prison hospital having been wounded. He also appears in additional Red Cross documents, one of which provided details of when and where he was captured and later incarcerated.

Also look through the British Army's daily reports, which includes missing people and those known to have been captured. You'll find these at Forces War Records (www.snipca.com/37152 – it costs £8.95 for one month's access to all its records, or £48.95 for 12 months). Here, I discovered Joseph was reported missing on 31 May 1915 (see screenshot above). Happily, he survived the war, and lived through the next one, before dying aged 80 in 1957.

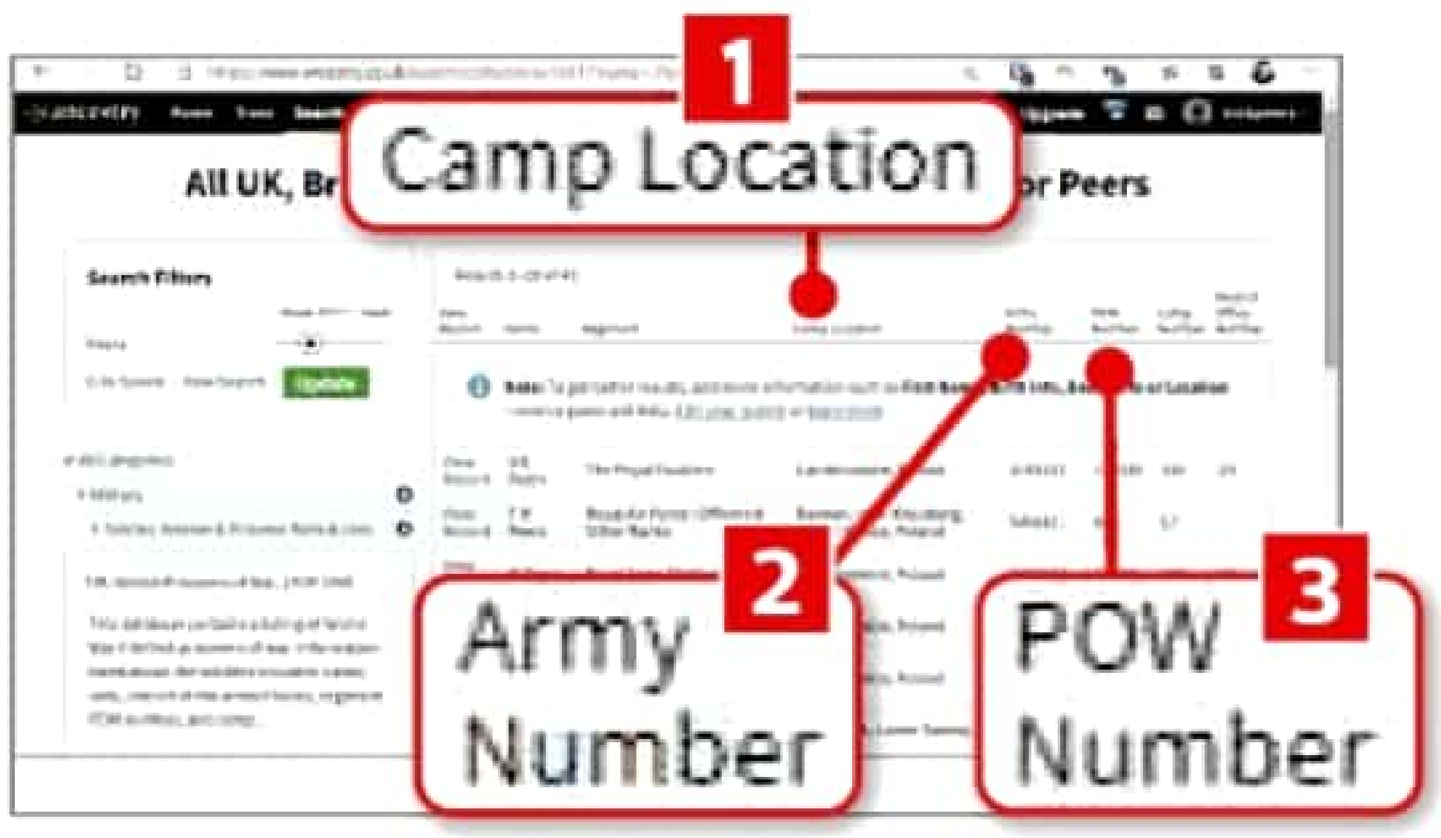
For a sense of what life was like in a camp, read the 3,000 prisoner interviews on TNA (www.snipca.com/37153). You can download a PDF of any interview for free while TNA remains closed during lockdown (usual cost is £3.50 per document).

### Search World War Two prisoners

For World War Two, the National Archives is again the place to start (www.snipca.com/37154). It highlights two places to search: the first is the Find My Past collection mentioned earlier, which includes PoWs from Japanese camps as well as German ones. The second – Ancestry's UK, British Prisoners of War, 1939-45 collection (www.snipca.com/37155) covers European prison camps only.

Search this by name or include additional details like army number, regiment or even PoW or Camp Number if you know them. You'll notice that search results show the initials, not the full name, but they do give plenty of other details including Camp Location (1 in our screenshot below), Army Number 2 and POW Number 3.

Finally, search the Daily Army Reports from Forces War Records' (www.snipca.com/37158), which work in the same way as its World War One collection mentioned above. When you click a record, the site lists other matches above it. If you scroll down you'll see additional information, including a potted history of your ancestor's regiment.



Ancestry's PoW records include vital data such as camp location and army number

## Your **Genealogy** Problems Solved

**If I perform a search on a website like Ancestry then copy and paste or bookmark the resulting URL, will clicking this address later show any datasets added since the original search was performed?**

**Dave Selway**

Yes, the web link should trigger a new search based on your previous search terms. If you've performed a general search across Ancestry, it should include any datasets the site may have added since your original search. The search should work for as long as the website uses the same search tools.

Have a genealogy question for Nick? Email letters@computeractive.co.uk with 'Grow Your Family Tree' in the subject line.

AOC

## Q34E2A

# High resolution and bold colours

with a wider view
& greater productivity

IPS WIDE VIEW

3 SIDED FRAMELESS

21:9
ULTRAWIDE

AUTOMATIC INPUT SOURCE

AOC
3 YEAR WARRANTY

Available at

amazon

laptopsdirect

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# Best Free **Software**

**Will Stapley** recommends new programs that won't cost you anything

**ASTRONOMY SOFTWARE**

## Cosmonium 0.2.1

www.snipca.com/37256
**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

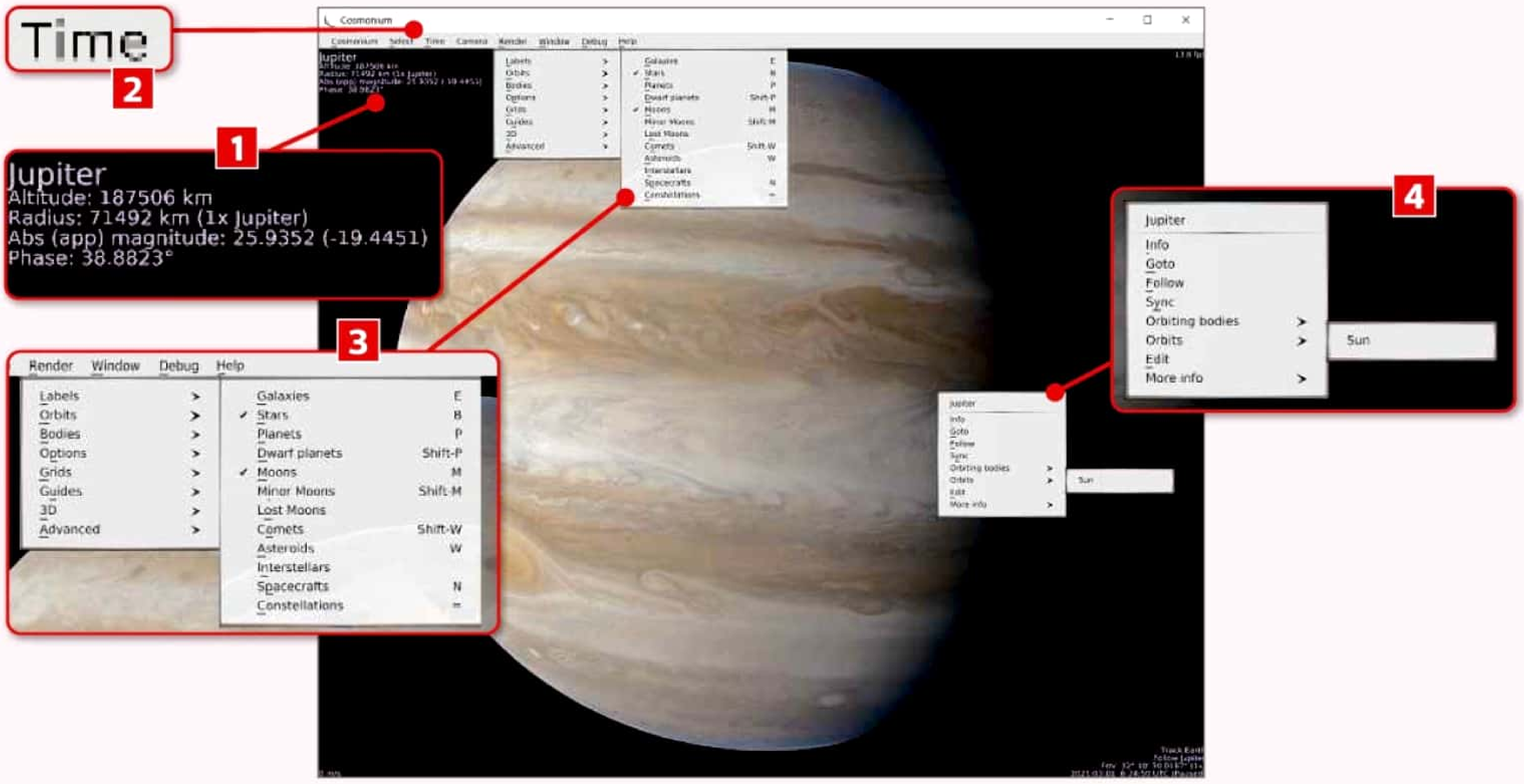
When viewing the night sky, Stellarium (http://stellarium.org) is a great companion, letting you choose your precise location on Earth before revealing what you're looking at. Cosmonium (click the Windows download link under the Binaries heading) does things slightly differently, letting you travel across our solar system and beyond.

Use your mouse to navigate (left-click to pan, right-click to rotate and use the scroll wheel to zoom in and out). To locate an object such as a moon, planet or star, press Enter to open the search box, type its name, then select from the results and press G to leap to that point in space. Alternatively, you can select objects simply by clicking them from your current view.

By default, Cosmonium will match its clock to the current time, but you can change this in the Time menu (see below). Press the L key to increase the time speed tenfold, '\' (backslash) to return to normal speed and '!' to return to the current time.

This version enhances the quality of planet textures and includes an updated Editor window (press Ctrl+E). The latter lets you set the detail levels for the planet you currently have selected. You can also install HD and Ultra HD textures for planets, though this process is not as easy as we'd like. You need to download the ZIP files separately (they're located just below the download link for the main program), then copy the contents into Cosmonium's Data folder.

Cosmonium is very demanding on a PC's resources. It performed reasonably well on our Dell laptop (Intel Core i7 processor, UHD 620 graphics card and 16GB of memory), but slowed noticeably when we zoomed in on planets. If you find it runs too slowly on your PC, try Celestia (www.snipca.com/37255) – a very similar (if less detailed) program upon which Cosmonium is based.


Time
2
1
3
4
Render Window Debug Help
Labels
Orbits
Bodies
Options
Grids
Guides
3D
Advanced
Galaxies E
Stars B
Planets P
Dwarf planets Shift-P
Moons M
Minor Moons Shift-M
Lost Moons
Comets Shift-W
Asteroids W
Interstellars
Spacecrafts N
Constellations =
Jupiter
Info
Goto
Follow
Sync
Orbiting bodies
Orbits
Edit
More info
Sun

Jupiter
Altitude: 187506 km
Radius: 71492 km (1x Jupiter)
Abs (app) magnitude: 25.9352 (-19.4451)
Phase: 38.8823°

**1** When you click on an object or search for it, Cosmonium displays its name and location details here. Press G to navigate to the object.

**2** You can view the universe from any point in time. Open the Time menu, then select 'Set time...'. If you want to freeze time, press Space.

**3** Open the Render menu to change options including whether to display labels for planets, stars, galaxies and more.

**4** Right-click an object to view additional information, including details of its orbit. Select 'More info' for a direct link to the object's page on Wikipedia.

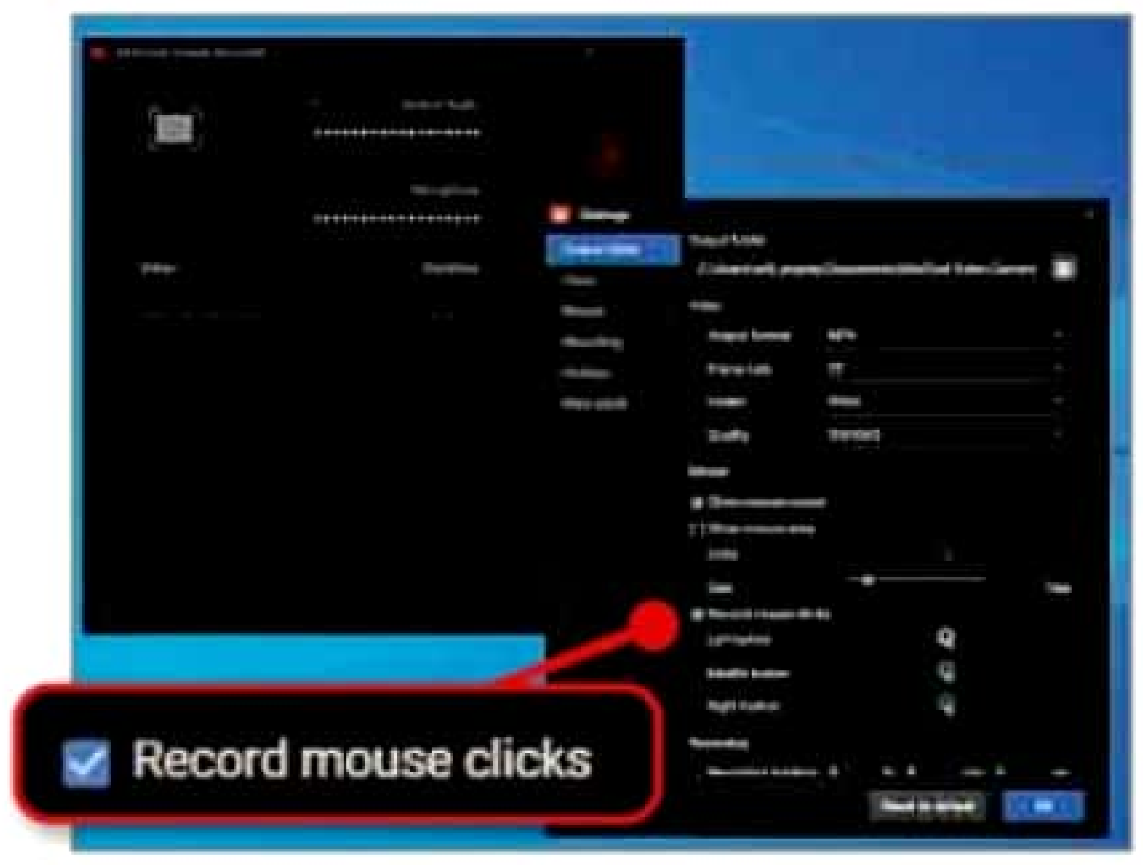
## VIDEO CONVERTER/SCREEN RECORDER

# MiniTool Video Converter 3.0

www.snipca.com/37247

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

Although predominantly intended for converting video formats, MiniTool Video Converter's most significant new feature is its screen-recorder tool (click the Screen Record tab on the main menu). You can set it to capture your entire desktop or a specific region, and the recording will include audio from your PC and microphone (you can mute these by clicking their icons). Click the cog icon (top right) to adjust more settings, including the video quality, and to add animations when you click a mouse button (see screenshot), which is particularly useful when creating instructional videos. Our only complaint is that, by default, the tool sends data back to the developer about how you use it – avoid this by clicking Custom Installation when installing, then unticking the 'Agree to participate...' box.



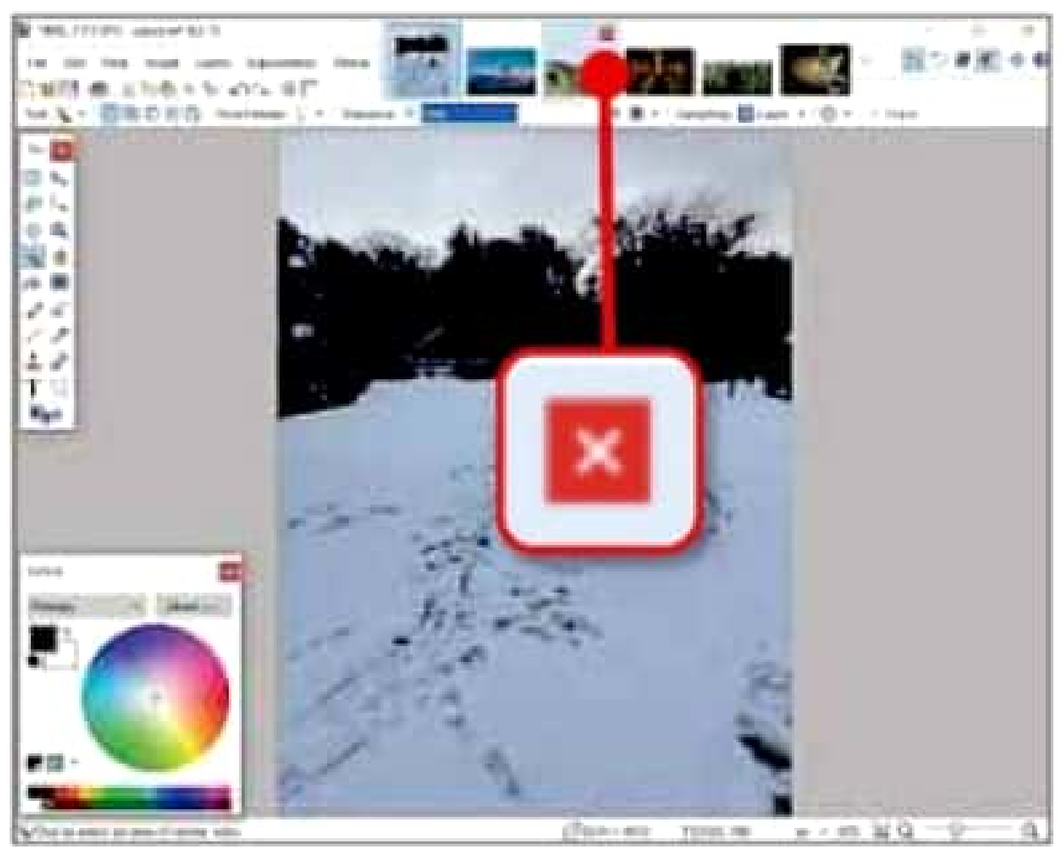
## IMAGE EDITOR

# Paint.NET 4.2.15

www.snipca.com/37246

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

It might not have as many advanced image-editing features as GIMP (www.gimp.org), but Paint.NET makes up for this by being much easier to use. When downloading, avoid the paid-for Microsoft Store version (the only benefit of this is that it includes automatic updates) and instead get the free version by clicking the dotPDN link just below it.



Paint.NET lets you open multiple images at the same time, letting you quickly switch between them when making edits. This version makes it easier to spot which of your images have unsaved changes (look for the asterisk next to its file name in the title bar) and close them (click the 'x' that now appears when you hover over an image's tab - see screenshot). Other improvements include an enhanced 'Text' tool, which lets you delete entire words by holding Ctrl while pressing Delete or Backspace (as in most word processors).

## WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

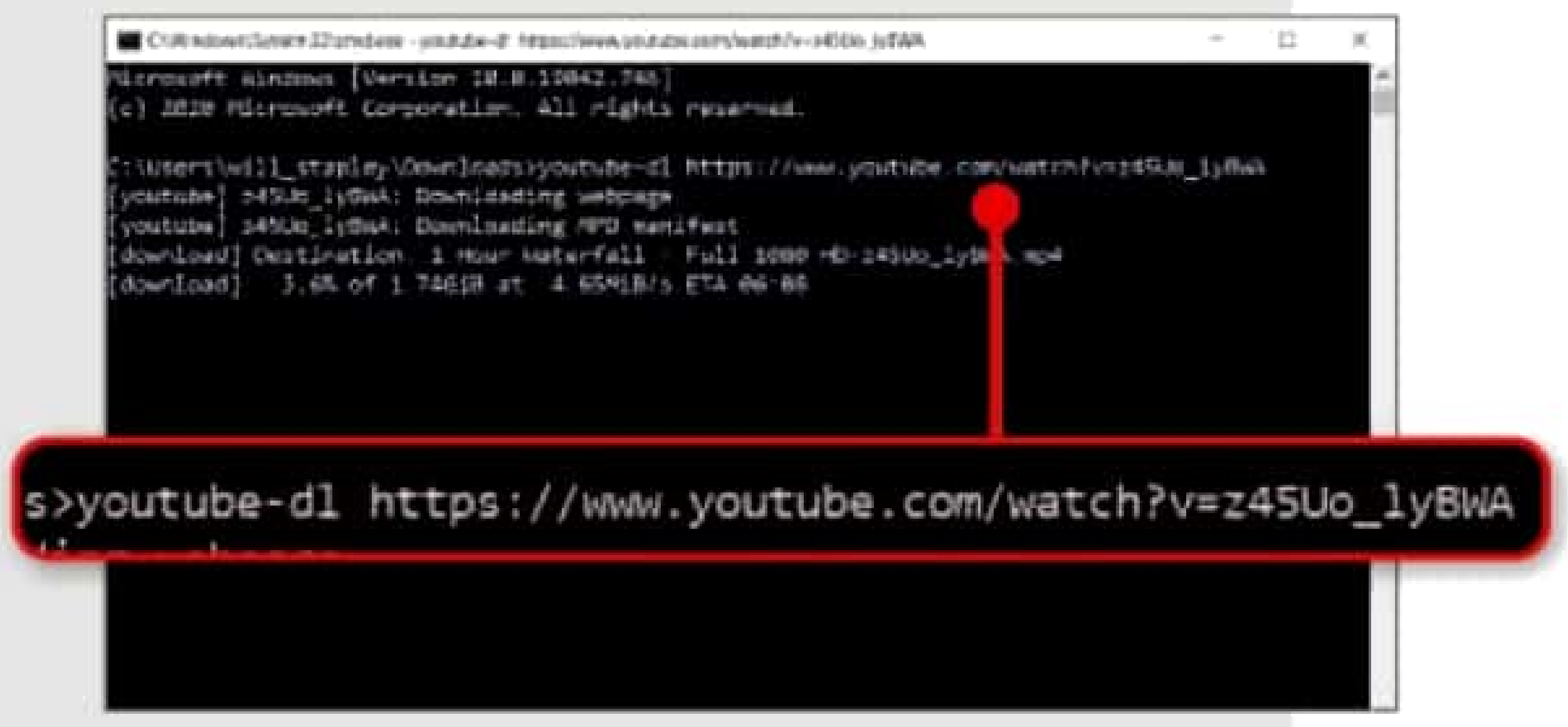
We tell you what software & apps to use

# How can I download YouTube videos?

**Q** I am a former *Web User* subscriber who, on its closure, was transferred over to *Computeractive* – and I am delighted with it. Could you tell me the best way to download hour-long recordings of waterfalls on YouTube? I would love to transfer one to a USB stick, then display it on a small TV set.

**Steve Jessney**

**A** We recommend using a free tool called YouTube-dl, which needs to be run via Command Prompt. To download it, go to www.snipca.com/37249 and click the 'Windows.exe' link at the top of the page. Next, open File Explorer (press Windows key+E) and navigate to your Downloads folder (click This PC in the left-hand pane, then Downloads). To open Command Prompt in this folder, press Alt+D to highlight File Explorer's address bar, then type cmd and press Enter.



```
s>youtube-dl https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z45Uo_1yBWA
```

In your browser, open the YouTube video you want to record, click the address bar, then press Ctrl+A to select the entire URL, followed by Ctrl+C to copy it. Now return to the Command Prompt window, type youtube-dl followed by a space, then press Ctrl+V to paste the YouTube URL (see screenshot). When you press Enter, YouTube-dl will start downloading the video. How long this takes depends on the video's length and your broadband speed - it took us just over eight minutes to download an hour-long video on our 60Mbps connection. Once the download is complete, the video will be saved in the same folder as YouTube-dl (it will have the same name as it has in YouTube).

If you'd prefer not to use Command Prompt, VLC (www.videolan.org) can also download videos. However, it records the video by playing it in real time, so your one-hour waterfall clip will take one hour to record. Open VLC, then press Ctrl+R and select the Network tab. Paste your YouTube URL in the box, then click 'Convert/Save'. Now click Browse, choose where you want to save the video file, then click Save followed by Start.

✉ Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

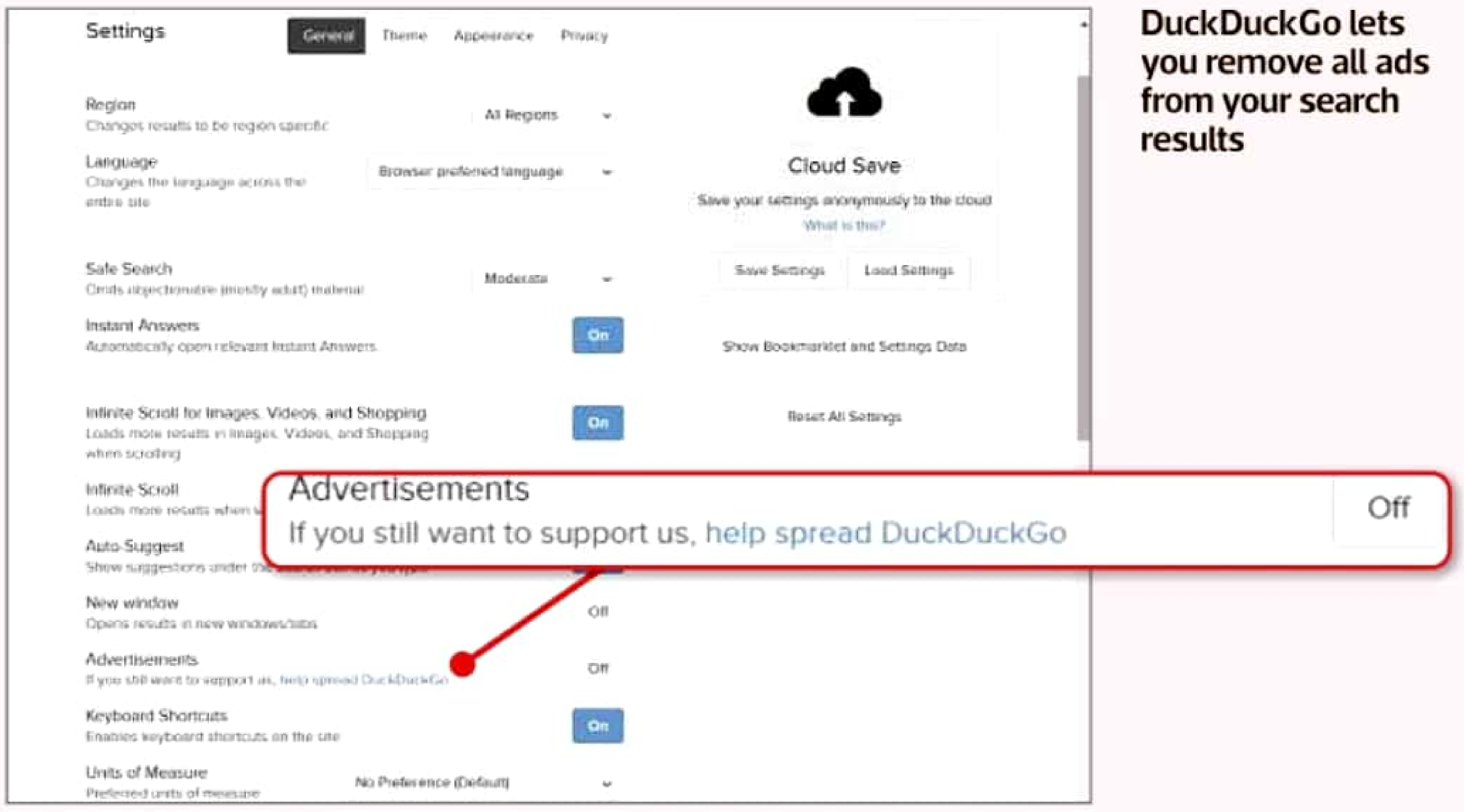
**HOW I USE...**

# DuckDuckGo

**Will Stapley** ditched Google search for this alternative, but not for the reasons you might think

Most people use the DuckDuckGo search engine (www.duckduckgo.com) to safeguard their privacy. Unlike Google, it doesn't store your search history then sell it to the highest bidder. Although admirable, this is not the reason *I* use DuckDuckGo. After all, I have multiple Gmail accounts, my phone runs Google's Android operating system and I plan my days using Google Calendar, so I'd need to do more than simply stop using Google's search engine to get my privacy back.

The reason I use DuckDuckGo is quite simple – I just prefer it. Like Google, it has a clean, uncomplicated design, but it also offers some terrific hidden features that improve the whole search experience.



Settings

General Theme Appearance Privacy

Region – Changes results to be region specific – All Regions

Language – Changes the language across the entire site – Browser preferred language

Safe Search – Omits objectionable (mostly adult) material – Moderate

Instant Answers – Automatically open relevant Instant Answers – On

Infinite Scroll for Images, Videos, and Shopping – Loads more results in Images, Videos, and Shopping when scrolling – On

Infinite Scroll – Loads more results when s

Auto-Suggest – Show suggestions under the

New window – Opens results in new windows/tabs – Off

Advertisements – If you still want to support us, help spread DuckDuckGo – Off

Keyboard Shortcuts – Enables keyboard shortcuts on the site – On

Units of Measure – Preferred units of measure – No Preference (Default)

Cloud Save

Save your settings anonymously to the cloud

What is this?

Save Settings Load Settings

Show Bookmarklet and Settings Data

Reset All Settings

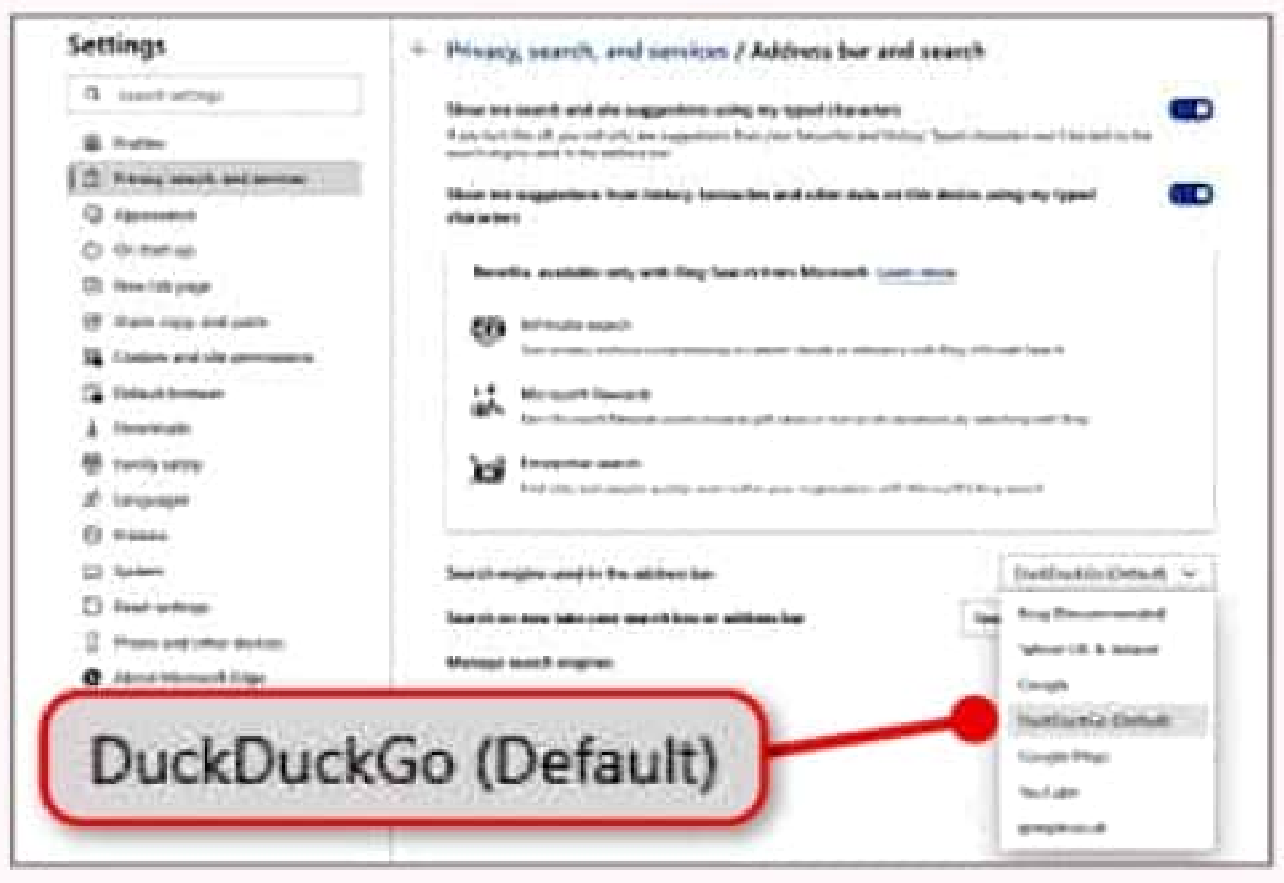
Advertisements

If you still want to support us, help spread DuckDuckGo

Off

DuckDuckGo lets you remove all ads from your search results

My favourite is a feature that lets me turn off adverts – do this by going to Settings (three horizontal lines, top-right), Other Settings, then changing Advertisements (see screenshot above) to Off. The search engine will still make money through its affiliate schemes with Amazon and eBay, who pay DuckDuckGo should you click their links in a search.



You can set Edge (and other browsers) to use DuckDuckGo as the default search engine

I've also tweaked how my results are displayed because I've never liked Google's page-based approach. Although Google has a tool to adjust the number of results per page (click Settings, 'Search settings' then adjust the 'Results per page' slider), this requires me to decide how many I want to see in advance. Also, setting it to the maximum of 100 means the page takes longer to load.

With DuckDuckGo, I've set it to display all my results on a single, scrolling page (go to Settings, Other Settings, then turn on Infinite Scroll). As a result, I typically end up seeing more results than with an equivalent search in Google. Google has never explained why it lacks a similar option, but I suspect the reason is revenue – although not as prominent as the top, the bottom of a page is still an opportunity for yet another advert.

DuckDuckGo also lets me use shortcuts to quickly run searches on other websites. When I want to search Amazon for a specific product, I prefix my search with !a - so typing !a USB sticks takes me to a search-results page on Amazon's site for USB sticks. You can do similar searches for Wikipedia (!w), eBay (!e) and even Google (!g) - see the full list of prefixes at www.snipca.com/37231 (click a category that interests you to reveal them).

I still use Google from time to time, but I've set DuckDuckGo as the default search engine for my browsers, and I recommend you do the same. In Edge, type edge://settings/search in the address bar (for Chrome type chrome://settings/search), then select DuckDuckGo in the 'Search engine used in the address bar' box (see screenshot above left).

## WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IN DUCKDUCKGO

DuckDuckGo does a reasonable job of providing smart search results – type 2+2 in the search bar and it'll display the answer in a calculator at the top of your search. However, it's still not as sophisticated as Google's smart searches - something I'd like to see improved. If I search for 'train from Brighton to London', for example, DuckDuckGo provides me with a selection of timetable and ticketing websites. In Google, I not only see a map of the route, but also the times of the next four trains and the platforms they depart from.

# Named & Shamed

**Jonathan Parkyn** puts the boot into tech villains, jargon-spouting companies and software stuffed with junk

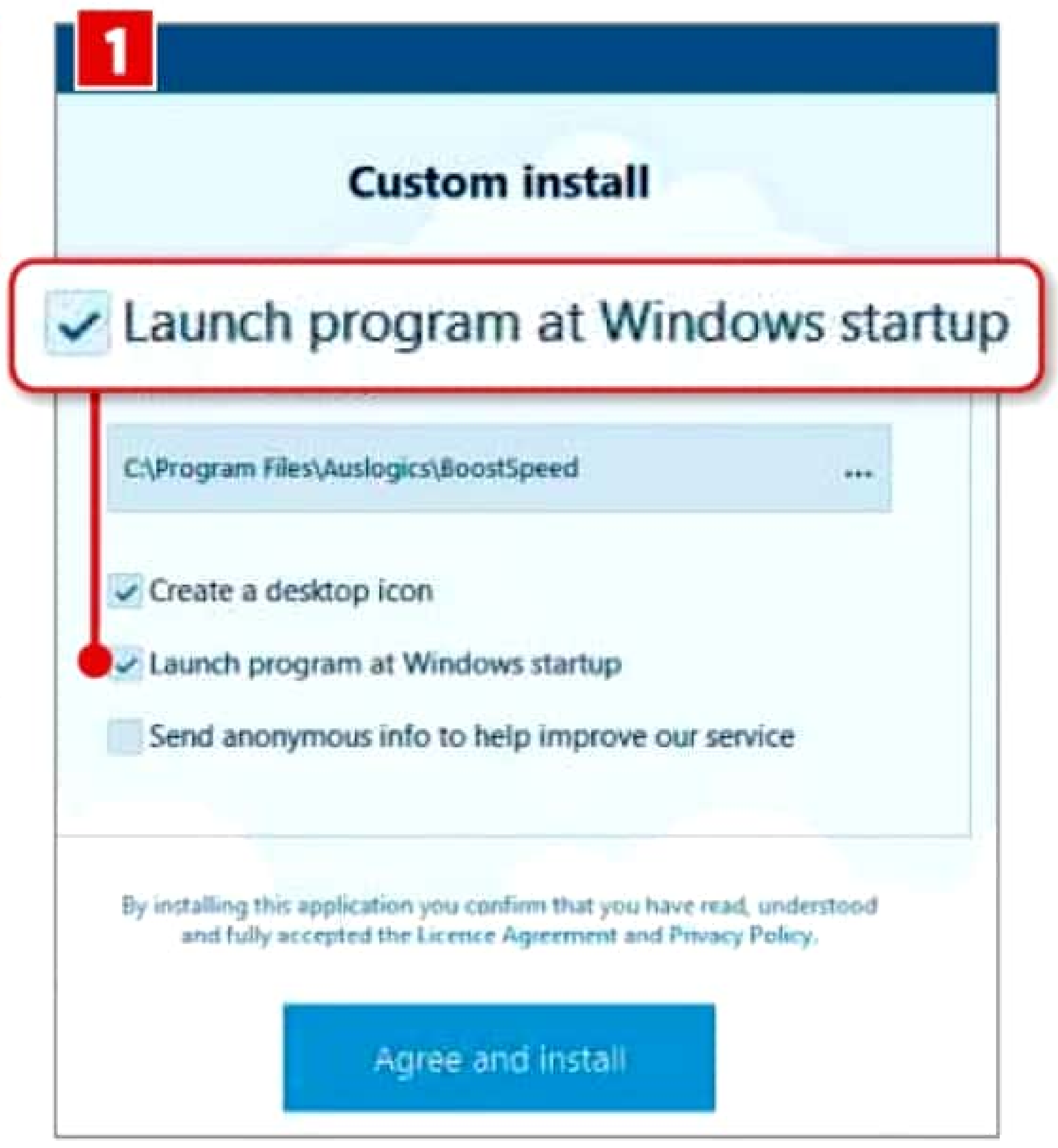
## WARNING: JUNK AHEAD

### **Junk offender:** Auslogics BoostSpeed

Some junk offenders lazily trot out the same old tricks time after time. But not Auslogics. I've noticed that the Australian software company likes to keep us all on our toes by experimenting with creative new ways to target you with unwanted garbage.

I've hauled Auslogics over the coals in the past, most recently for Duplicate File Finder (Issue 588) and its attempts to turn junk into a game by offering 'Mystery Boxes' that entice you to pay for tools you probably don't need. This time, however, my sights are set on BoostSpeed – a tool the company claims on its web page (www.snipca.com/37248) will optimise your PC by removing unwanted tools and disabling startup programs.

It's ironic, then, that the tool has pretty much the opposite effect. If you don't take care to click the Custom option during installation and untick the appropriate pre-ticked box (see screenshot 1), for example, BoostSpeed will set itself to launch at startup, effectively dragging down your boot speed and slowing your PC's performance by running unnecessarily in the background.



Custom install

☑ Launch program at Windows startup

C:\Program Files\Auslogics\BoostSpeed

☑ Create a desktop icon

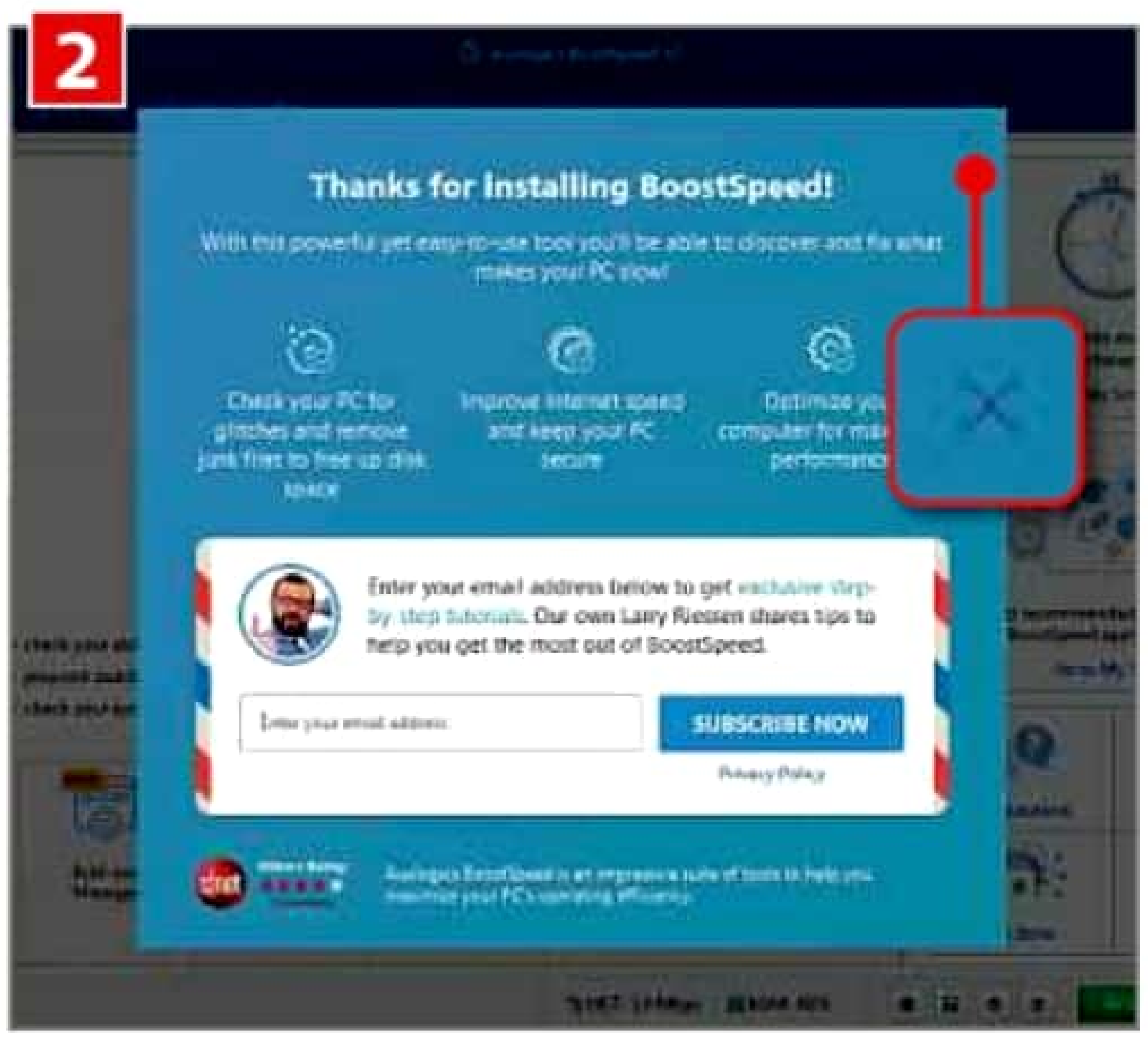
☑ Launch program at Windows startup

☐ Send anonymous info to help improve our service

By installing this application you confirm that you have read, understood and fully accepted the Licence Agreement and Privacy Policy.

**Forget to untick this box and BoostSpeed will actually *slow* your PC at start-up**

You'll also want to untick the option to 'Send anonymous info' to prevent Auslogics from gathering your user data. And you'll need to navigate various 'special offer' screens during setup to dodge other tools.



Thanks for Installing BoostSpeed!

With this powerful yet easy-to-use tool you'll be able to discover and fix what makes your PC slow!

Enter your email address below to get exclusive step-by-step tutorials. Our own Larry Riessen shares tips to help you get the most out of BoostSpeed.

**Owls won't struggle to spot this, but you might**

We've seen tricks like these before, of course. What's new is a screen that pops up when you first launch BoostSpeed. It's an invitation for you to subscribe to 'exclusive step-by-step tutorials' – in other words, a thinly veiled attempt to grab your email address and, inevitably, fill your inbox with further junk.

To dismiss this box you have to click the top-right 'X' (see screenshot 2), though you'll need the eyesight of an owl to spot this.

## WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

### WHAT THEY SAY

**Judson Althoff, Microsoft**

www.snipca.com/37250

"Well before the pandemic, many of our customers had embraced a modern compute paradigm in the cloud and were increasingly looking to create an economic flywheel or engine to unlock further innovation."

### WHAT THEY MEAN

Covid-19 hasn't affected our ability to spout incomprehensible rubbish designed to make us sound clever.

## JONATHAN'S VILLAIN OF THE FORTNIGHT

### 'Sylvester Stallone'

I've heard of scammers pretending to be police officers, Microsoft staff and even Nigerian royalty, but never an ageing Hollywood superstar. A recent spate of online dating scams in Stockton, near Middlesbrough, included one fraudster wooing his match by pretending to be *Rocky* and *Rambo* legend Sylvester Stallone.

According to the *Northern Echo* (www.snipca.com/37252), the unnamed victim was so convinced they were talking to the real Sly that they were prepared to pay for him to fly to England for a date. The Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board has published a short guide on spotting dating scams (www.snipca.com/37253), such as being suspicious of people who don't want to meet in person. Perhaps they should add 'rich movie stars who ask for the price of a plane ticket' to the list?

# Reviews

New products tested by our experts

**PC** | **£999** from Currys www.snipca.com/37137

## HP Omen 25L

### Game for most things

HP might not be the first brand you think of when looking for a versatile PC that's as good at gaming as it is at creating spreadsheets, but the Omen 25L range could change that. It comes in a variety of configurations but our review model came installed with an Intel Core i5-10400F processor, 16GB of memory, a 256GB SSD, 1TB hard drive, and an Nvidia GeForce RTX 2060 graphics card.

> "Impressive graphics performance for game-playing, less speed on everyday tasks"

Most of the PCs we've seen at this price come with Nvidia's GTX 1660 graphics, so putting an RTX 2060 in here is a generous move. In our tests this produced a frame-rate boost of around 10fps over similarly priced PCs with GTX 1660 graphics, so it's well worth considering if you're looking for a PC to run the latest games.

However, this has led to compromise elsewhere, and the Core i5-10400F processor leaves it running a bit slower in general Windows tasks. The good news is, with 16GB of memory installed, you're unlikely to run into anything that will make life too difficult for the i5 chip, unless you're doing work that requires significant computing resources, such as editing complex videos.

GEFORCE RTX
25L
OMEN

Inside the case there are two free memory sockets, should you want to install more at a later date, and there's a spare 3.5in drive bay alongside the installed hard drive and SSD. You can access these without using any tools, because the drive caddy slots into place and the PC's interior can be reached by the push of a button.

HP uses its own motherboard, so it doesn't come with much room for further upgrades, but it's well equipped with a USB-C port at the rear, and built-in Wi-Fi 6 and Bluetooth.

The Omen 25L runs quietly and efficiently, with a barely audible low whirr from its fans. We noticed the fan stepped up a gear when the system was put under the stresses of gaming, but we'd be surprised if you notice it once you've immersed yourself in the action.

As is usual with HP PCs, this model comes with a range of pre-installed software to help you maintain it. For example, there's a handy tool called JumpStart that can help keep your hardware's drivers up to date.

This tower unit doesn't have the gaudy fairground lighting that many gaming PCs come with. Instead it has a glass-sided case (pictured left) that lights up like a jeweller's display when the PC is switched on. HP hasn't attempted to hide the cables away, placing them front and centre as they snake around the case. Together, it gives the PC a striking industrial look.

Computer active
RECOMMENDED
★★★★
OMEN

**VERDICT** Powerful graphics make this a cracking PC for gamers but, to maintain this price tag, HP compromised on the processor

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE**

Palicomp Intel Mercury

£600 This doesn't have the same graphics prowess, but it's still a very capable PC for a lot less money

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Six-core Intel i5-10400F processor • 16GB memory • 256GB SSD • 1TB hard drive • 1x USB-C port • 4x USB 3.0 ports • 2x USB 2.0 ports • Display Port/DVI-D/HDMI ports • 802.11ax Wi-Fi • Windows 10 Home • 433x165x369mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/37137

**LAPTOP-TABLET** | **£979** from Dell www.snipca.com/37157

# **Dell** Inspiron 15 7000

## Flipping marvelous

Few of us can afford to fill our boots with every single gadget we want, and we often have to make a choice when it comes to buying the next must-have item. If you're torn between a laptop and a tablet, however, then you could stick your finger into both pies with this latest version of Dell's 2-in-1.

> “It's great, but flipping it round into a tablet won't make it feel like an iPad”

Unfortunately, you won't get the best of both worlds here. There's no problem with the laptop configuration, which looks and works as well as any Dell laptop ought to. Flipping the screen all the way round, however, doesn't turn this into an iPad, and Windows 10 doesn't come close to iPadOS as a touchscreen interface. However, for the convenience of browsing the web without a keyboard in the way, or arranging the screen into a tent-like shape for resting on a table while watching a video, the benefits are clear.

Aside from its foldability, the Inspiron 15 7000 is a regular Windows 10 laptop. It comes with a 15.6in touchscreen (with Full HD or 4K options), an 11th-gen Core i5-1135G7 or Core i7-1165G7 processor, 12GB or 16GB of RAM, and either a 512GB or 1TB SSD for storage. If you choose the superior components from Dell's website, the price tag rises, but our review unit had the basic specification.

The laptop looks smart, stylish and well made. The underside panel and lid are plastic rather than metal, but neither looks particularly cheap. The lid has some flex to it but only if you apply deliberate force. A metal chassis and palm rest ensure solidity in the main body of the device.

There are plenty of ports, including an HDMI output, two USB 3.2 ports, and a USB-C connector that can charge the device (though there's also a regular power adapter) and connect to another screen.

The 1920x1080-pixel resolution, 141ppi IPS screen is impressive for a machine in this price range. It has a maximum brightness of 330cd/m², while the sRGB colour coverage is 97 per cent and there's decent contrast of 1,003:1.

We were impressed by how the components worked together, with the performance of this relatively new Core-i5 chip comparing well with Core-i7 PC's we've looked at previously. Meanwhile, the Intel Iris XE graphics card performed surprisingly well in our gaming tests. The battery lasted a decent 8 hours 10 minutes in our video-playback test.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Core i5-1135G7 processor • 12GB memory • Intel Iris Xe graphics • 512GB SSD • 802.ax Wi-Fi • 1x USB-C port • 2x USB 3.0 ports • 1x HDMI port • Windows 10 Home • 17.9x356x238mm (HxWxD) • 1.78kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/37157

### HOW WE TEST

*Computeractive* is owned by Dennis Publishing, which employs a team of specialist technical reviewers. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every phone and tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazine *PC Pro* and the websites Expert Reviews (www. expertreviews. co.uk) and IT Pro (www.itpro.com). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

### FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

### OUR AWARDS

We award every product that gets five stars our Buy It! stamp of approval. It means we were extremely impressed by the product, and we think you will be too.

Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Recommended award. We highly recommend these products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

### PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

**VERDICT** It's a powerful laptop, but Windows 10 still isn't suited for touchscreen tablets

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE** HP ENVY x360 13-ay0009na Convertible Laptop 2020 Edition Ryzen 7 £1,000 This laptop-tablet comes with a smaller screen, but it has a faster faster AMD Ryzen 7 processor

**PC** | **£449** from Currys www.snipca.com/37172

# Acer Aspire XC-895

## Low-rise tower

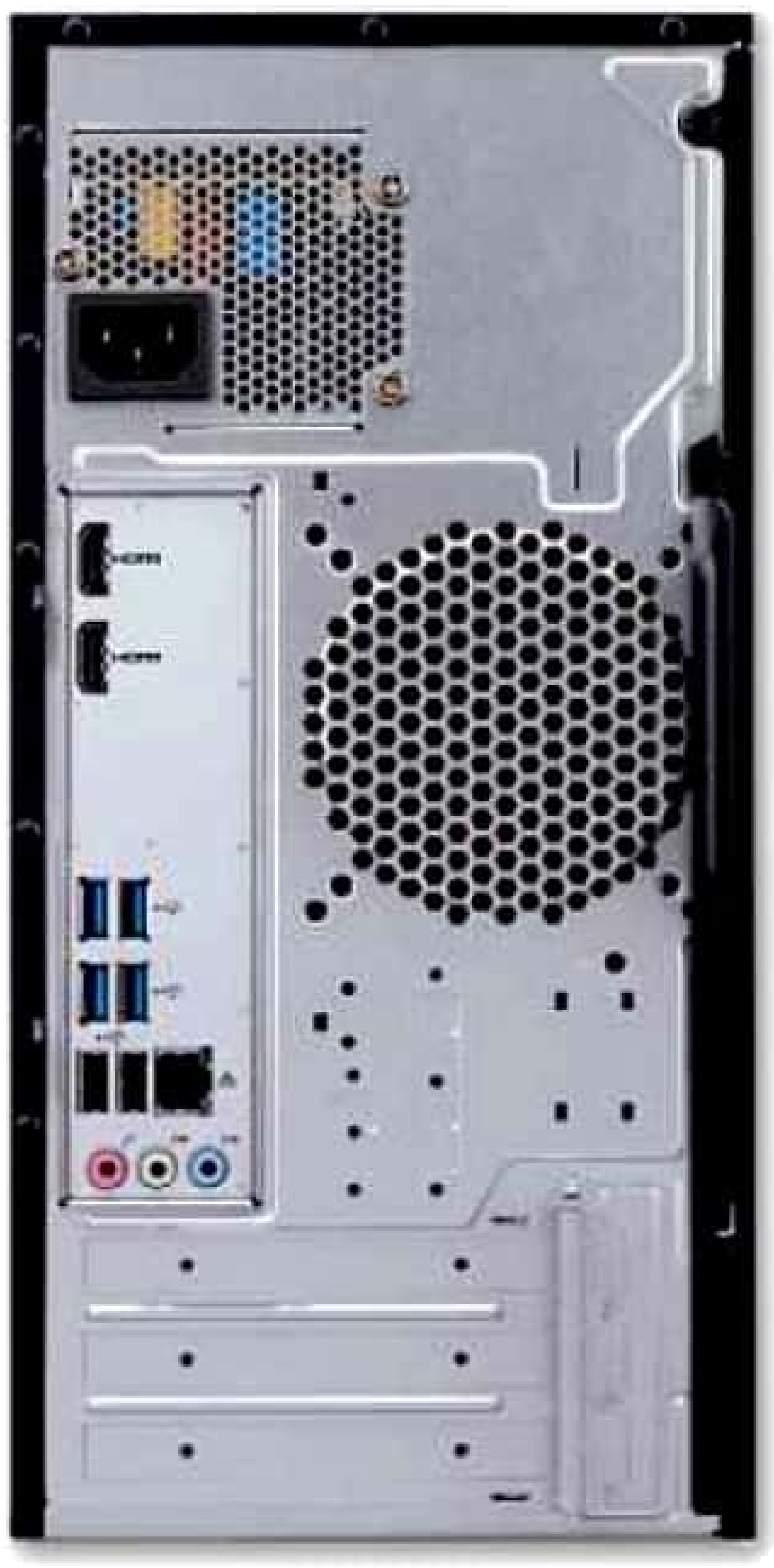
Computer active
RECOMMENDED
★★★★

We usually think of a desktop PC in a tower configuration as being a huge thing that you have to hide under your desk. The Acer Aspire XC-895 comes in a smaller tower case, though, which still stands upright, but is small enough to sit unobtrusively next to your monitor. Its footprint is only 100x330mm, and it stands 295mm high.

> “A good choice if you want to spend less now and upgrade later”

It has plenty of ports for such a small device. There's a full size SD card slot on the front, along with a USB-C port, a USB 3.0 port and two 3.5mm audio jacks for headphones and microphone. But don't be fooled by the slot on the front for an optical drive – this is just a blanking plate that covers a gap into which you could add your own CD, DVD or Blu-ray drive if you want to upgrade in the future.

Round the back there are more ports, including two HDMI (so you can run a dual-monitor setup), four more USB 3.0, a couple of USB 2.0, an Ethernet port and a few audio sockets (pictured right). This is plenty, and we suspect that even the most demanding users will find enough to work with here.



Bluetooth and 802.11ax Wi-Fi come built in, so you shouldn't have to use any of those USB slots to add wireless dongles in the immediate future, though you will need to plug one in if you want to use the wireless mouse and keyboard that come bundled with the system. It also comes with a year's subscription to Dropbox, including 100GB of online-storage space.

The XC-895 is equipped with Intel's six-core i5-10400 processor, the same one that's installed in the HP Omen we've reviewed on page 22. However, this doesn't mean you can spend £500 less on this model and expect the same performance. Where the Omen comes with 16GB of memory, a separate graphics card and a fast SSD to run Windows from, this more affordable Acer PC comes with only 8GB of memory, uses the Core i5's built-in HD 630 graphics hardware and has a comparatively slow standard hard drive.

This made a significant difference in our performance tests. While the HP Omen ran games smoothly, making the most of the additional graphics power in its separate graphics card, the XC-895 faltered at the first hurdle, proving incapable of running most of our gaming benchmarks and struggling with the simplest of 3D games at 1080p resolution.

It fared better at running the Geekbench 5 test, which largely pushes the processor, though the HP Omen still squeezed more out of it.

In our standard Windows benchmark, which takes the extra help provided by memory and hard drive into account, the XC-895 result (117) was little over half the score of the HP Omen (226). It shows us that the extra £500 you'll spend on a more powerful PC can provide the processor with a lot of extra support.

However, if you're looking to buy now and upgrade later, the Aspire XC-895 has a bit of room for manoeuvre. It isn't as upgradeable as a desktop PC in a larger case might be, but you could pop an SSD into the space behind the optical drive panel, because there's a spare SATA connection ready and waiting for it.

The supplied 8GB of memory comes on a single DIMM stick and there's a second empty slot next to it, so doubling up the memory would be a simple upgrade. There's also an open PCIe slot, so you could even upgrade the graphics.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Six-core Intel Core i5-10400 processor • 8GB memory • 1TB hard drive • 1x USB-C port • 6x USB 3.0 ports • 2x USB 2.0 ports • 2x HDMI ports • 802.11ax Wi-Fi • Windows 10 Home • 295x100x330mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/37172

**VERDICT** A compact tower-style desktop PC that's both affordable now and has space inside for upgrading in the future

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE** HP EliteDesk 705 G5 £479 An even smaller PC that can easily tuck away behind a monitor

**LAPTOP** | **£1,540** from Lenovo www.snipca.com/37179

# **Lenovo** ThinkPad T14s AMD Gen 1

## Back in black

Computer active
RECOMMENDED
★★★★

Lenovo's ThinkPad range are workhorse laptops, often found in the bags of office workers. However, they're just as useful in the home if you want a solid, reliable laptop without frills and frivolities. You won't find a ThinkPad with a shiny silver case but the practical black magnesium alloy of this model hides a competent computer with an attractive three-year warranty.

> "A reliable workhorse with a great screen and pacy performance"

You can equip a ThinkPad with a range of alternative components but our review unit came with an octa-core AMD Ryzen Pro 4750U processor, 16GB of memory and a 512GB SSD. This is an impressive configuration, but costly at £1,540. You can reduce the price to £1,260 with a cheaper six-core AMD 4650U chip and reduce the storage to 256GB, or start at £1,050 if you switch to Intel processors.

All the models have plenty of physical connections. On the left edge is a pair of USB-C ports, one USB 3.0 port, a full-size HDMI connector and a 3.5mm headphone jack. On the right edge is another USB 3.0 port. It comes with 802.11ax Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 5.

If you're thinking of using it for video calls, you'll like the call-specific shortcut keys along the top of the keyboard, in place of the usual media control buttons. There's also a microphone-mute key and a physical privacy slider for the laptop's 720p webcam. We found the image from the camera disappointingly soft focus, but the built-in microphone worked well.

The keyboard is a real pleasure to type on, with gently curved keys to cradle your fingertips. Our only complaint is that the Control key isn't in the corner of the keyboard, which takes some getting used to if you do a lot of cutting and pasting with Ctrl+X and Ctrl+V.

Our review unit had Lenovo's 'Low Power' 1080p resolution screen. We measured its peak brightness at 371cd/m2 and its contrast ratio at 1,671:1, both of which are impressive, while its sRGB range was a highly respectable 92.6 per cent.

The laptop also more than held its own in our performance tests , being one of the fastest we've tested recently. Compared with recent models we've tested, this laptop is one of the fastest. In Windows' benchmarks and Geekbench 5 tests it outperformed everything except the new laptops powered by Apple's latest M1 processor. It's not aimed at gamers, though, as there's no dedicated graphics hardware. In our video-playback test, the battery lasted seven hours.

### SPECIFICATIONS

AMD Ryzen Pro 4750U processor • 16GB memory • AMD Radeon Vega graphics • 512GB SSD • 802.11ax Wi-Fi • 2x USB-C ports • 2x USB 3.0 ports • 1x HDMI port • Windows 10 Pro • 16.1x329x226mm (HxWxD) • 1.27kg • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/37179

**VERDICT** A competent, reliable laptop with a long warranty; great for Windows work but not gaming

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Apple MacBook Air (2020) £999 If you can live without Windows, Apple's latest MacBook Air outperforms everything in its price range

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

## HDMI

### What does it do?

The ubiquitous HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface) can be used to connect almost any modern device that requires a screen to any TV or monitor made in the last 15 years or so.

### How does it work?

Because all screens now work digitally, the HDMI cable (pictured) takes the digital signal from the source device and carries it to the screen. The monitor or TV uses this stream of information to build up the image. If you cut an HDMI cable in half you'll see a number of wires. These share the load of carrying all that data, which is time-stamped to help the receiving device put it all together again.

### What are the specs?

There have been a range of HDMI standards over the years, from 1.0 through to the latest 2.1. The physical shape of the connector hasn't changed (though there are Mini and Micro versions), so it's impossible to tell what version you have by looking at it unless the manufacturer has labelled it. The change between each version has to do with the bandwidth – the speed at which data can be sent down the cable. The first HDMI cables and ports were good enough to transfer HDTV up to 1080p (1920x1080 pixels) at 60fps, along with any accompanying digital audio. HDMI 2.0 was introduced to cater for 4K screens (3840x2160 pixels) at 60fps. For higher resolutions or more frames per second, you need HDMI 2.1.

### Can I change it later?

You may be able to upgrade the HDMI port on a desktop PC by upgrading the graphics card, but check your cable first. An old HDMI 1.0 cable can't be used to connect two HDMI 2.1 ports at top speed. You can't change the HDMI port on other devices, such as laptops and tablets.

**PHONE** | **£769** from Amazon www.snipca.com/37212

# Samsung Galaxy S21

## Out of this world

Samsung's Galaxy S21 is the first top-end phone to be launched in 2021, with the South Korean company clearly looking to start the year with a bang. As usual there are three models in the range, but this S21 is the most affordable. The S21+ offers a larger screen and a bigger battery for £949, and the S21 Ultra is even bigger and has a 108-megapixel camera for £1,149, but we think this basic model offers the best value for money.

> "One of the best performing Android phones we've seen"

The 6.2in 120Hz screen reaches almost to the edge on all sides and is absolutely superb. In testing, it displayed 95.8 per cent of the sRGB colour range, with a peak brightness of 652cd/m2. The back of the device is made of plastic rather than metal or glass, though it has a matt finish that looks classy and feels good in your hand.

**SPECIFICATIONS**
Octa-core Samsung Exynos 2100 processor • 8GB memory • 6.2in 120Hz 2,400x1,080-pixel screen • 64-megapixel rear camera • 10-megapixel front camera • 128 or 256GB storage • 802.11ax Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 5 • Android 11 • 152x71x7.9mm • 171g • Two-years warranty www.snipca.com/37212

It's the first phone to use Samsung's new Exynos 2100 processor, backed up by a generous 8GB of memory, which all helped it run Android 11 smoothly (the update to Android 12 is yet to be announced) and perform well in our benchmark tests. It doesn't score as highly as the Apple iPhone 12 in the Geekbench 5 test, but it's one of the best performing Android phones we've seen to date. It worked well in gaming tests, too. Thankfully the increase in power doesn't run down the battery too fast, with it lasting an excellent 18 hours 56 minutes in our video-playback test.

The phone supports 5G connections and includes 802.11ax Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 5. The one thing it doesn't have is a microSD card slot, which means the 128GB or 256GB of built-in storage you choose when you buy the phone is as much as you will ever have. That's disappointing, although the supplied storage should be enough for most people.

Computer active
BUY IT!
★★★★★

Something we have a harder time accepting is the removal of the charger from the box. Taking a leaf from Apple's book, the Galaxy S21 comes with only a USB-C charging cable. This feels a little cheap, as not everyone upgrading an older phone will already have a USB-C charging block.

Nevertheless, the cameras on Samsung's phones are usually brilliant and there's no change with this model. It captures great images and decent video no matter what the lighting conditions.

**VERDICT** Up there with the best Android phones you can buy, with a fantastic screen and great performance

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Apple iPhone 12 £799 Apple's latest is a bit more expensive but pips the S21 in benchmark tests

**WHAT SHOULD I BUY?** We solve your buying dilemmas

## What do I need to connect a second VGA PC monitor?

**Q** I connect my PC to my monitor using a VGA connection. My PC has a second VGA port on the back. If I connect it to a second VGA monitor, however, it doesn't work. What do I need to add to my PC to work with both monitors? I don't have an HDMI port on either monitor.

**Phil Barrett**

**A** The extra VGA port is the one you'd connect to if there wasn't a graphics card present. You told us you have a Radeon R5 235 graphics card installed in your PC, which explains why this port is disabled.

However, there should be other ports on your graphics card. The models we've seen come with HDMI and DVI ports. Although your monitors don't have these ports, you can buy a cheap adapter that plugs into an HDMI port and outputs a VGA signal. This should connect to your second monitor's VGA cable and create the dual-screen system you're looking for.

Shop around for the best deal, but a Benfei adapter from Amazon should do the trick (£7 from www.snipca.com/37222, pictured). If you only have a DVI port rather than an HDMI port, buy a DVI-to-VGA adapter instead, but check your graphics card's specifications to see if it's the DVI-I or DVI-D standard before you buy.

✉ Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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**PHONE** | **£180** from Motorola www.snipca.com/37196

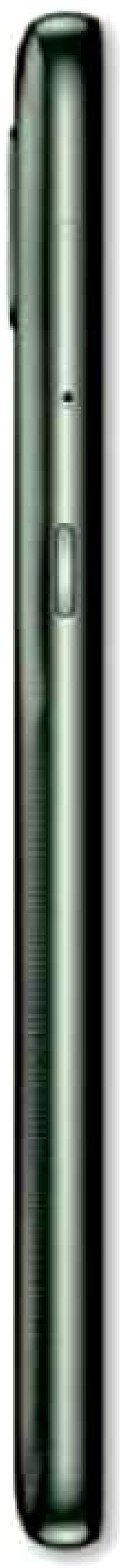
# **Motorola** Moto G9 Power

Going, going... still going

The Moto G9 Power is the third and final model in Motorola's G9 range, following on from the G9 Plus (£200) and the G9 Play (£160). It follows the pattern of previous generations of Moto G phones with the 'Power' in the name hinting at this smartphone's superior battery life. Inside there's a 6,000mAh battery, the biggest to be fitted into a Moto phone to date. According to Motorola, it should last 60 hours between charges.

> "A large screen, generous storage and a battery that'll get you through a weekend"

The battery isn't the only impressive thing about the phone. It also has a large 6.8in screen, a Qualcomm Snapdragon 662 processor and a generous 128GB of internal storage, which can be expanded to 512GB via a microSD card. You'll also find a 64-megapixel main camera on the rear, complemented by secondary macro and depth-sensing lenses. It's a phenomenal combination for a very affordable £180.



As you might expect from a phone of this price, the case is made of plastic. The chunky battery and large screen makes the phone heavy, weighing in at 221g, so it's not particularly easy to fit in your pocket.

The screen's resolution is 720p, with a standard refresh rate of 60Hz. Motorola has clearly saved a bit of money here because it reproduces only 83.5 per cent of the sRGB colour range. It's not terrible, but falls short of many rival smartphones. However, it's bright and has good contrast, which help make up for the colour shortfall.

With all that out of the way, it's time to take a peek inside. The Moto G9 Power has a 2GHz eight-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 662 processor, which is paired with 4GB of memory and the 128GB of storage.

Computer active
RECOMMENDED
★★★★
11:35

In our benchmark tests, we found it performed surprisingly fast for a phone in this price range. In the Geekbench 5 processor test, it gains a small lead on the previous model, the Moto G8 Power, and outperforms the Xiaomi Redmi Note 9 and the more expensive Samsung Galaxy M31 in multi-core processing.

Gaming performance paints a similar picture, with marginal gains on the Moto G8 Power and the Galaxy M31. It isn't a gaming juggernaut by any means, but in GFXBench GL's onscreen Manhattan 3 test it achieved a 34fps average, which proves it should be able to cope with most Google Play store games without much fuss.

Where you should set high expectations, however, is the battery life. It lasted an astonishing 26 hours 51 minutes in our video-playback test. We've seen only two phones perform better than that, and the only one that's currently available is the pricier Galaxy M31, which made it past the 30-hour mark. During testing we easily managed two days of use before needing to charge.

It's the camera that suffers on more affordable phones but the G9 Power's main camera is good enough, on the whole. On a sunny winter afternoon, we were able to capture detail-rich images of local buildings and boats meandering down a river with a pleasingly neutral colour palette and well-judged exposures. It wasn't as impressive in low light, though, with some noise noticeable in shots and the camera often struggling to focus on what we were pointing at. Having said all that, it's far from the worst phone camera we've tested in these conditions.

The other serious irritation is that the camera software often struggled to keep pace with our intentions. Sometimes there was a noticeable shutter delay, for example, and the viewfinder lagged a fraction of a second behind when panning in low-light environments, which isn't ideal.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

6.8in 1,640x720-pixel screen • 64-megapixel rear camera • 16-megapixel front camera • 128GB flash storage • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 5 • Android 10 • 172x77x9.7mm • 221g • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/37196

**VERDICT** Reasonably priced, with a solid performance and a battery that just won't quit, but the quality of the camera is disappointing

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE**
Samsung Galaxy M31 £245 This smartphone is more expensive but its battery life is even more impressive

**WIRELESS EARPHONES** | **£229** from Amazon www.snipca.com/37195

# **Bose** Sleepbuds II

Some good snooze at last

Computeractive RECOMMENDED ★★★★

If you count yourself among the unfortunate group of people that struggle to nod off at night, these sleep-inducing earbuds might help.

For £229 you get the buds, a puck-shaped aluminium charging case, three different sizes of silicone eartips and a USB-C charging cable. The Bose Sleep app is also required, and runs on both Android and iOS devices.

The earbuds connect to your mobile device over Bluetooth but don't stream audio from it like regular earbuds. Instead your smartphone controls the playback of a range of sound effects that are stored in the earbuds. This uses less power than regular streaming, ensuring the buds have a long enough battery life to last through the night. However, it limits the Sleepbuds' general appeal because you can't drift off listening to your choice of audio.

> “Comfortable and comforting for those who struggle to sleep”

There are currently 45 sounds available to listen to. These range from rain falling on a window to a crackling campfire, designed to cover, rather than block or cancel out, external noises. There are also some generic melodic tones that work better as relaxation aids than to nudge you to sleep.

The Sleepbuds certainly helped us to drift off during testing, with the nature sounds proving the most successful. It helps that they're the most comfortable, unobtrusive earbuds we've ever tested. Their flat profile doesn't protrude out of your ears at all, so they exert very little pressure on your inner ear while your head is resting on the pillow.

The batteries offer 10 hours of use, and the case can recharge the buds three times before it also needs recharging. We tested the earbuds with the Sleep Timer feature set to an hour, after which time they switched themselves off. After an eight-hour sleep, we generally woke to find them with around 60 per cent battery remaining. They take a long time to recharge – around six hours to go from empty to full. The batteries drain in a few days even if you haven't used them, so it's worth making sure they're always topped up.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Bluetooth 5 • USB cable • 3 sizes of ear tips • Aluminium charging case • 27x77x77mm (HxWxD) • 2.27g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/37195

**VERDICT** If you struggle to nod off, these comfortable earbuds could help lull you to sleep with relaxing natural sounds

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE** Kokoon Relax £315

Don't like wearing earbuds? These over-the-ear headphones are surprisingly comfortable in bed

## DO I REALLY NEED...

## A smart mask?

### What is it?

Wearing a face mask has become an unfortunate necessity that's not going to disappear any time soon. However, a number of companies have launched smart masks, adding new functions you never knew you needed.

### What does it do?

All sorts of things. The AirPop Active+ Halo Smart Mask (£149 from www.snipca.com/37226, pictured) measures the quality of air you're breathing. The MaskFone (£50 from global.maskfone.com) has built-in earbuds and microphone, so you can take calls and listen to music. Razer's Project Hazel (www.snipca.com/37227) is still a prototype, but will amplify your voice to reduce muffle and can bathe your face in coloured light.

### What's the catch?

Price. These masks are designed to be reused, so are expensive. Don't forget how much you paid for them and accidentally throw them in the bin.

### So can I do without it?

Yes, because no one needs these extras over-complicating their face masks.

## NEXT ISSUE

### On Sale Weds 24 Feb

**Xiaomi Redmi Note 9T**
Could this be your next Android smartphone?

**Acer Swift 5 SF514-55T (2021)**
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## Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

### LAPTOP

**Honor** MagicBook 14
**£600** from www.snipca.com/34688
**Tested** Issue 580

Using an AMD Ryzen 3500U processor, this lightweight metal laptop beat Microsoft's Surface Laptop 3 with Intel's i7-1065G7 in our tests. The 14in Full HD screen lacks colour accuracy but looks decent. For the money, it's a great buy.

**ALTERNATIVE Dell XPS 13** New Intel CPUs and a taller screen make this a more powerful, all-round slim notebook, although prices now start at a steep £1,629 from www.snipca.com/36642

### DESKTOP PC

**Palicomp**
Intel Mercury
**£600** from www.snipca.com/34223
**Tested** Issue 576

If you don't need advanced gaming, your money's well spent here on a six-core Intel i5-9600K processor overclocked to 5GHz. 16GB of memory and a full terabyte of fast SSD storage round off a powerful PC with good expansion potential.

**ALTERNATIVE Chillblast Photo Zen** Fast Ryzen 7 CPU plus adequate GPU makes a superb work PC. £1,580 from www.snipca.com/35840

### APPLE iPAD

**Apple** iPad 10.2in
**£329** from www.snipca.com/36178
**Tested** Issue 566

The basic iPad is great value, especially now it's been updated with a powerful A12 processor and iPadOS 14. It includes Scribble handwriting recognition with the £89 Apple Pencil. Storage isn't expandable; consider 128GB at £429.

**ALTERNATIVE iPad Mini** With an even better, but smaller, screen than the 10.2in iPad, the Mini also supports the Pencil and has 64GB of storage. £399 from www.snipca.com/33050

### ANDROID TABLET

**Samsung** Galaxy Tab S6 Lite
**£349** from www.snipca.com/35795
**Tested** Issue 582

Competing with Apple's cheapest 10.2in iPad, this slim aluminium tablet comes with an S Pen stylus and a generous 64GB of storage at a reasonable price. It's less powerful, but a great buy if you prefer Android.

**ALTERNATIVE Amazon Fire HD 8** Now with USB-C and 32GB of storage, this plastic-cased tablet is more limited, with no stylus option, but good for the money. £90 from www.snipca.com/35336

### APPLE iPHONE

**Apple** iPhone 12
**£799** from www.snipca.com/36582
**Tested** Issue 595

The latest iPhone has a modest increase in already exceptional processing power plus even better photos and videos from the front and twin rear cameras. It comes in a redesigned case with aluminium frame and even tougher glass. Consider paying the £50 extra for 128GB of storage.

**ALTERNATIVE iPhone SE** With a single camera and smaller screen but the same powerful A13 processor and 64GB storage as the iPhone 11, it's great value. £399 from www.snipca.com/34773

### ANDROID PHONE

**Realme** X50 5G
**£269** from www.snipca.com/36037
**Tested** Issue 590

Amazing value for a big 5G phone with three rear cameras (including ultra-wide and macro), a pretty quick Snapdragon 765G processor and a decent IPS screen. There's a fingerprint reader, but no wireless charging or waterproofing.

**ALTERNATIVE Google Pixel 5** Cheaper than previous Pixels, this has great cameras, wireless charging and a superb screen. Battery life is 23 hours. £599 from www.snipca.com/36586

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# Buy It

## Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

### EBOOK READER

**Amazon** Kindle (2019)
**£70** from www.snipca.com/31621
**Tested** Issue 555

Chapter One

Now with built-in light and audiobook support, this budget model is fine for most users, though limited by its 4GB of storage. The Paperwhite (£120) is even sharper, waterproof, and has bigger storage options as well as a cellular data option (£100 extra).

**ALTERNATIVE Kobo Clara HD** Not waterproof, but has more lighting options to avoid blue light. £110 from www.snipca.com/32586

### SECURITY SOFTWARE

**Kaspersky** Internet Security 2021
**£14.99** from www.snipca.com/21532
**Tested** Issue 564

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Protection for all devices

Kaspersky Internet Security has won our past nine antivirus tests and the 2020 version is now available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-year, one-device licence or buy a two-year, two-device licence for just £26.99.

**ALTERNATIVE Norton 360 Deluxe** Almost as good as Kaspersky, but blocks more legitimate software. £15 from www.snipca.com/32069

### PHOTO EDITING

**Serif** Affinity Photo
**£49** from www.snipca.com/23739
**Tested** Issue 498

Designed for both full-time professional image retouchers and the rest of us keen amateurs, this is a beautifully designed and comprehensive program for both Windows and Mac users, although so far it performs better on Macs.

**ALTERNATIVE Xara Photo & Graphic Designer** For all-round design and drawing plus photo filters, this affordable app has a lot to offer. £42 from www.snipca.com/26514

### PC MONITOR

**BenQ** GL2780
**£157** from www.snipca.com/34834
**Tested** Issue 581

This budget 27in screen offers accurate sRGB colour with good contrast, plus auto brightness and low blue light modes. Speakers are built in. Using TN LCD rather than IPS, it needs to be viewed straight on, but works well for games too.

**ALTERNATIVE Philips Brilliance 241B7QPJEB** With a great picture, stylish design and speakers, this 24in Full HD IPS is an excellent smaller screen. £199 from www.snipca.com/37096

### ROUTER

**D-Link** DIR-1960
**£100** from www.snipca.com/32849
**Tested** Issue 564

D-Link
D-Link

Giving us download and upload speeds of 460Mbps and 375Mbps respectively, this is phenomenal value. Even two floors away we got 329Mbps and 284Mbps. It has four Ethernet ports for wired devices and a USB 3.0 socket to share storage via your network.

**ALTERNATIVE Synology RT2600ac** Comprehensive sharing features, controls and plenty of add-on apps complement excellent long-range performance. £222 from www.snipca.com/30710

### PRINTER

**Epson** Expression Premium XP-6105
**£119** from www.snipca.com/36630
**Tested** Issue 554

With many leading all-purpose printers having sold out during lockdown, this white version of the XP-6100 wireless six-ink printer/scanner/copier is a good choice for photos first and text second. It's easy to use and speeds aren't bad, but ink costs can work out high.

**ALTERNATIVE Epson EcoTank ET-2711** This inkjet printer/scanner/copier isn't cheap but will save you a lot on ink (1p for two colour pages). Photo quality isn't the best, but scans are good. £180 from www.snipca.com/36183

COMPETITION

# Win 1 of 3 D-Link DIR-X1560 Wi-Fi 6 routers

D-Link's DIR-X1560 router brings next-generation Wi-Fi 6 technology into your home, dramatically increasing signal capacity and bandwidth to support more devices simultaneously.

Four high-gain external antennas and built-in power amplifiers work together to generate a broader and more reliable Wi-Fi signal to reach more rooms and provide coverage throughout your home.

Using 1024-QAM technology, it can deliver Wi-Fi combined speeds of up to 1500 Mbps, while beamforming and MU-MIMO target higher bandwidth to all your devices.

It has a Wi-Fi Guest Zone, so you can set guest logins for when you have visitors and block any devices you don't know. Use the app to set parental controls so you can manage what your children see online.

To enter this competition, email your address to **cacomp@dennis.co.uk** by midnight Tuesday 23 February. Good luck!

You can buy **D-Link's DIR-X1560** router for £99.99 from Amazon (www.snipca.com/37109). For more information on D-Link products, including mesh Wi-Fi to cover the whole home, visit www.dlink.com and follow @DLink_UK on Twitter.

MESH ROUTER

### **BT** Whole Home Wi-Fi

**£200** from www.snipca.com/26990
**Tested** Issue 496

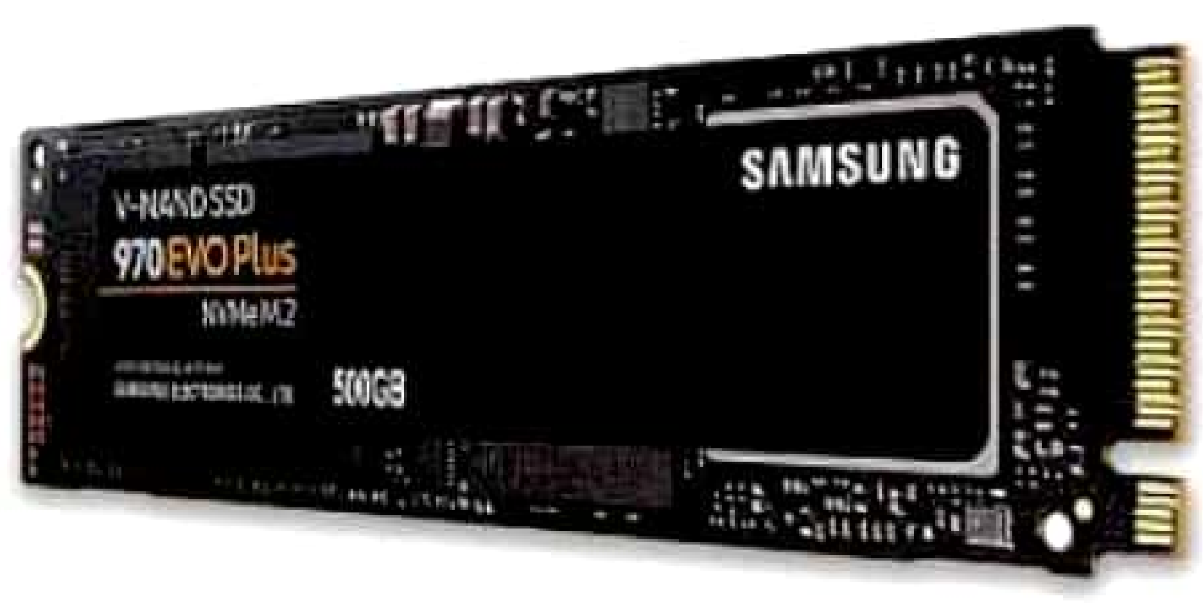
BT's set of three discs, managed from an Apple or Android app, connects to your broadband and spreads high-speed Wi-Fi all around the house. Reception is far better than a single router, and the price is lower than any rival.

**ALTERNATIVE Zyxel Multy X** These two pillow-shaped boxes are powerful enough for most homes and provide four Ethernet ports apiece. £255 from www.snipca.com/27309

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

### **Samsung** 970 Evo Plus 500GB

**£82** from www.snipca.com/31265
**Tested** Issue 552



Although its price has fluctuated since we tested it at £99, this is a very fast (over 3GB per second) M.2 SSD unfazed by tests that make others slow to a crawl. Also consider the Adata XPG SX8200 Pro if you find it a bit cheaper.

**ALTERNATIVE Crucial MX500 500GB** As fast as an SSD can get in the traditional 2.5in SATA format, this is a great-value upgrade. £60 from www.snipca.com/30188

WEB DESIGN

### **Xara** Web Designer Premium

**£69** from www.snipca.com/34150
**Tested** Issue 453

Primary Daycare

This visual program makes creating sites more like laying out a document than writing HTML code, and sites can be responsive, meaning they look good on big and small screens. A cheaper, basic version is also available for £35.

**ALTERNATIVE Incomedia WebSite X5 v13 Evolution** It may feel basic, but this program outputs efficient HTML code and responsive pages. £39 from www.snipca.com/31179

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**35** Back up your files to an old computer
**38** Use extensions when browsing anonymously
**40** Master the new Kodi
**42** Readers' Tips
PLUS
**44** Phone & Tablet Tips
**46** Make Windows better
**47** Make Office Better
**48** In the club: Share info in a Google Drive folder

# HOW TO...

## Back up your files to an old computer

by Nik Rawlinson

**What you need:** A spare computer; Windows 7, 8.1 or 10 **Time required:** One hour

One way to breathe new life into an old computer is to make it support your current machine. How? By turning it into a backup server to store files for other machines on your home network.

A lot of uses for an old PC require that it stays within arm's reach, but not this one. As long as your computer has access to power and a network connection, it can be pushed into a corner, stuck in the garage or left in the loft. Best of all, we'll be using the tools built into Windows to make it accessible on your network, so you won't need to buy specialist software.

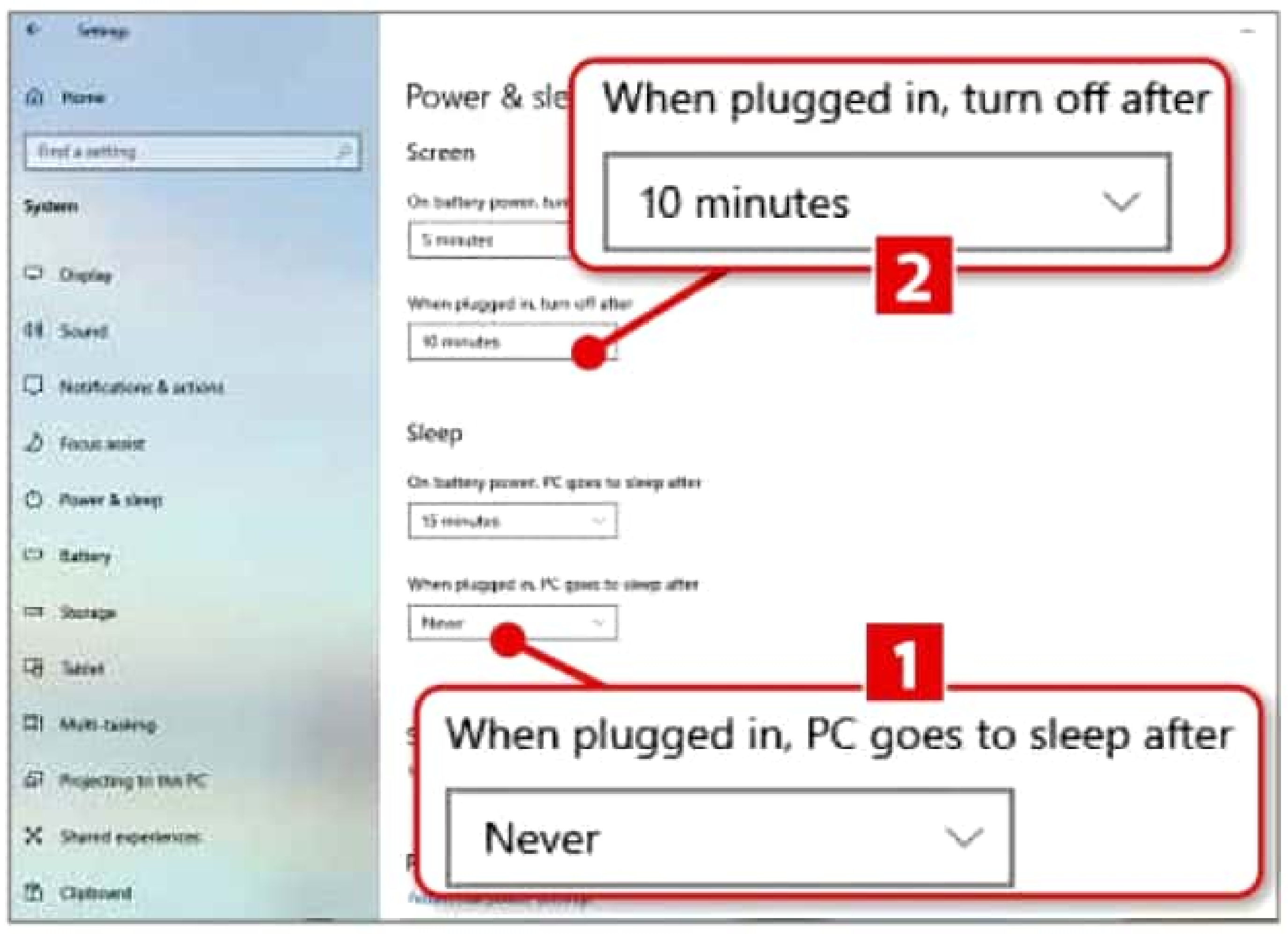
### 1 Set your old PC's power options

We'd recommend keeping your old and new computers near to each other as you set them up so you can check they're working properly. First, switch on your old computer, let it boot and install any pending security updates. To do this, open the Settings app by pressing Windows key+I, click 'Update & Security', then click 'Check for updates'. Apply any updates that are offered, then reboot your machine.

Once the reboot is complete, return to 'Update & Security' and click 'Advanced options', then make sure the slider beside 'Restart this device as soon as possible when a restart is required to install an update' is to the right (switched on), so the machine will always update itself as soon as Microsoft releases fixes.

As you'll need to access your old computer across the network, you also need to make sure that it's always available, which won't be if it goes to sleep or turns off. So, return to the Settings app and click System followed by 'Power & sleep'. In the Sleep section, click the menu below 'When plugged in, PC goes to sleep after' and select Never (1 in our screenshot below).

Above the Sleep section, look at the Screen menus. It's not a problem if your screen goes to sleep – and indeed it can be a good thing because it will reduce your power consumption. So, select a brief period from the menu below 'When plugged in, turn off after' – we selected 10 minutes 2.



On battery power, turn off after: 5 minutes

2 When plugged in, turn off after: 10 minutes

On battery power, PC goes to sleep after: 15 minutes

1 When plugged in, PC goes to sleep after: Never

Make sure your PC is set to stay awake at all times, though you can let the screen go to sleep

As you can see from our screenshot, we have options for both battery power and mains power on our computer because it's a laptop. You probably won't see this on a desktop PC unless it has its own power cell, so don't worry if those options are missing on your computer.

If you do have options for battery power, consider setting them to match your mains power settings. That way, if there's a brief power outage there may be sufficient power in the battery to sustain the machine until the mains returns, which will save you from having to manually restart it later.

➡

## 2 Share your old PC's drive across your network

The next step is to share a point on the hard drive or SSD on your old computer across your network, so it can be accessed by other machines in your home. The process for doing this changed in 2018 when Microsoft removed the HomeGroup tool, but it's still easy to do.

Open File Explorer, then click Network in the sidebar to make sure your network is visible. If Windows throws up the error message shown in the screenshot below, you need to change your settings, so open Control Panel then click 'Network and Sharing Centre' followed by 'Advanced sharing settings'. Make sure the options to 'Turn on network discovery' and 'Turn on file and printer sharing' are both selected, then click 'Save changes'.

Back in File Explorer, navigate to the folder where you'd like to create your shared sub-folder. We've put ours in the root of our user folder, so it won't show up in the usual Windows libraries, like documents and photos, but is still easy to access, and isn't floating in a random location. To do the same, click This PC in the left-hand sidebar, and double-click C: in the main part of the window. Now open the Users folder, then double-click your own folder inside it. Right-click any empty space within your own folder and hover over New on the menu, then click Folder. Call your new folder Shared.

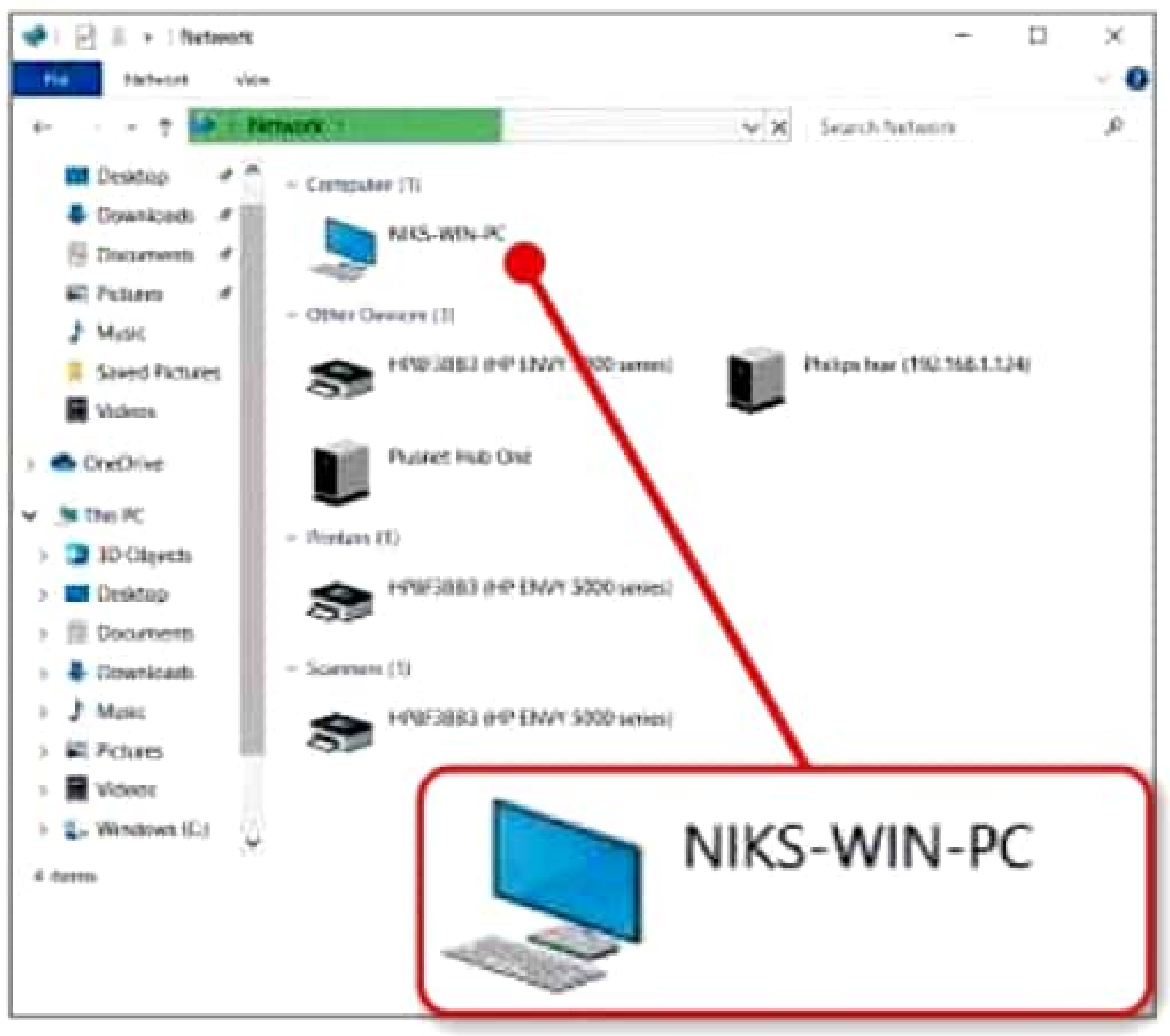
You now need to make the folder visible to other machines, so right-click it again, hover over 'Give access to...' and click 'Specific people'. Your user account will already be present in the list of people who have access to the folder. Click 'Share' and you'll see a list of people who already have access to the folder (see 'Nik Rawlinson' in the screenshot below).

## How I Use shared folders

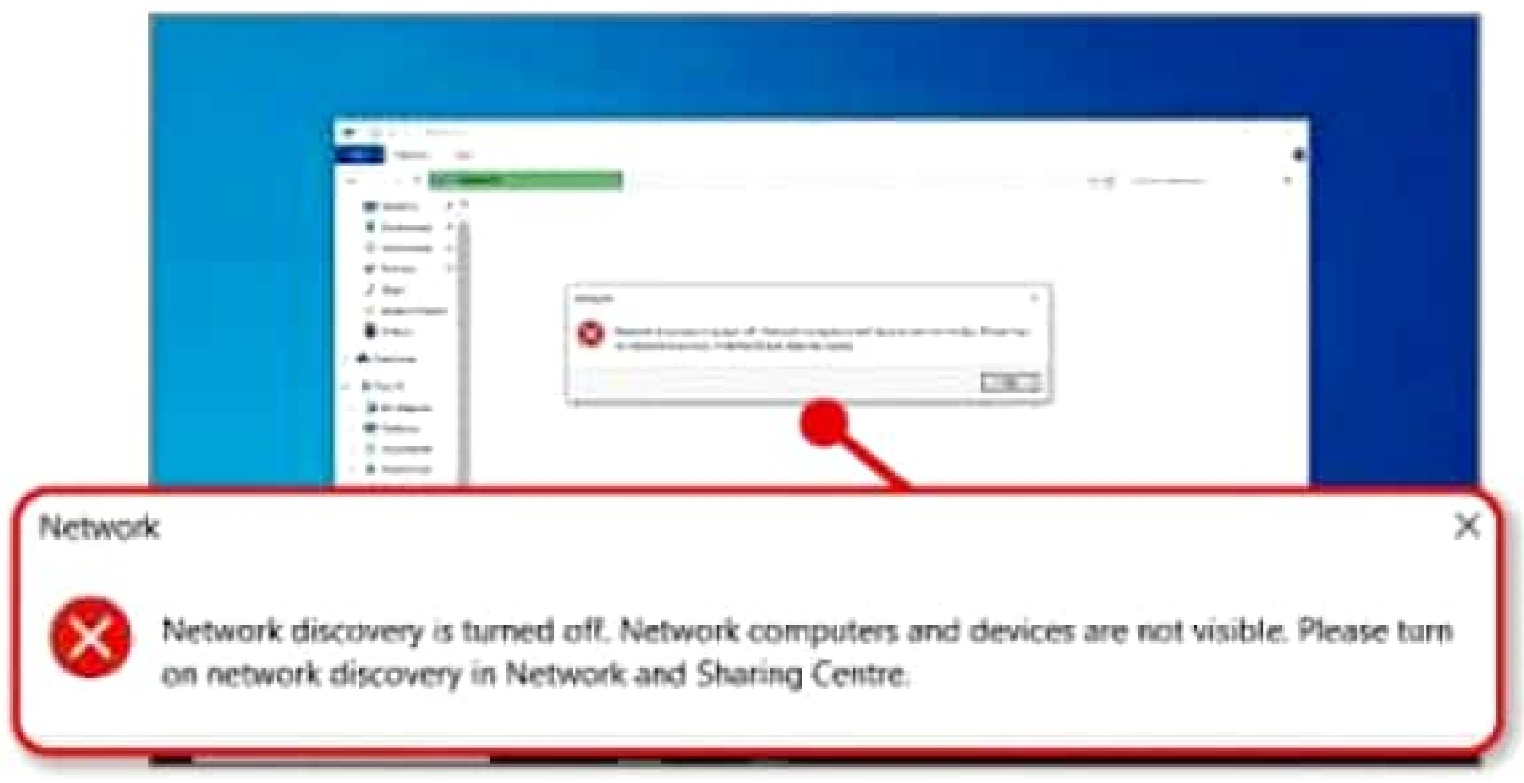
The biggest appeal of shared folders is their ability to mimic online-storage services while leaving total control in your own hands. I therefore use a series of shared folders across machines on my local network to swap files between them. I make sure that I drag and drop copies of important documents to a second drive across my network so that I'll have a spare if the machine on which they were created corrupts. Shared folders are perfect for this.

**Nik Rawlinson**

How do you use folders shared across your home network? Please let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk



Our shared folder is stored on NIKS-WIN-PC



Network

Network discovery is turned off. Network computers and devices are not visible. Please turn on network discovery in Network and Sharing Centre.

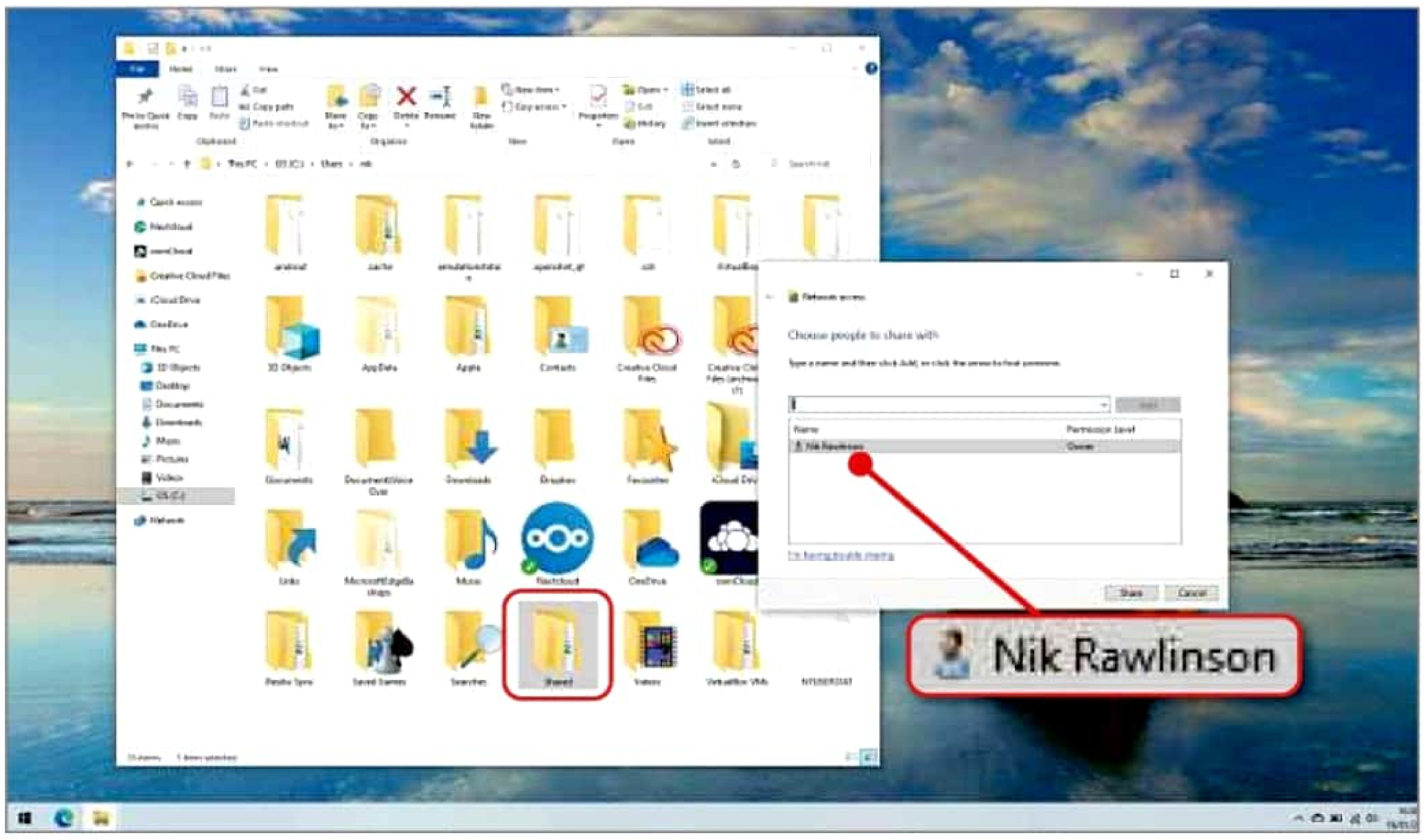
You'll see this error message if Windows isn't set up to share folders across your network

## 3 Access your folders remotely

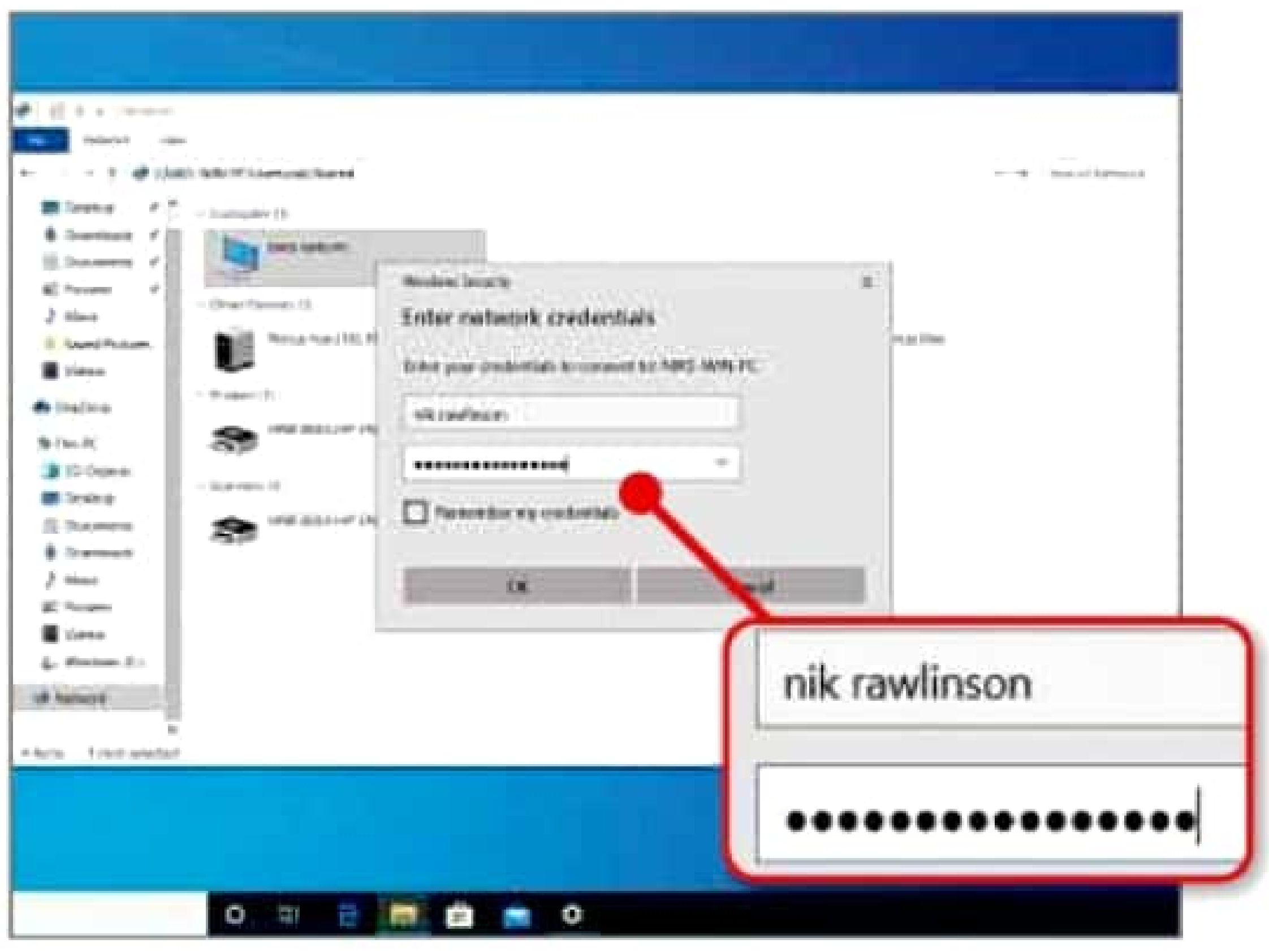
Now switch to your new machine, open an Explorer window and click Network in the sidebar. Again, if network sharing hasn't yet been enabled, you'll see the same error message as we did on the computer whose folder we were sharing. Fix it by following the instructions we outlined above for enabling it through the Control Panel.

When sharing has been activated, you should see a range of network-connected devices in the main part of the window, which, as our screenshot above shows, includes our router, scanner, printer, some smart light bulbs and our remote computer, called NIKS-WIN-PC.

Click in the address box above the list of devices and type the address that your old machine showed once you'd set up the shared folder, then press Return. Windows will ask for your login credentials (see screenshot below). These will be the username and password



This folder is now shared with anyone who has your login details and Windows will now show its address on your network



Access your shared folder by entering the username and password for your old computer you use to log into the old machine (remember they may be different to what you use to log into your current computer). This will open the remote folder on your new computer which, at the moment, should be empty.

## 4

## Add your folder to File Explorer

You don't want to have to navigate to your remote folder every time you do a backup, so the next step is to add it to the sidebar and give it a drive letter. Click 'This PC' in the sidebar, then right-click in any blank space within the main part of the window. Click 'Add a network location' on the menu that appears. Click 'Next' on the first screen of the instructions, then click 'Choose a custom network location', followed by Next. On the following screen, Windows will drop your cursor into a box. Type the address of your shared folder, as it appeared on your old computer at the end of the sharing process.

Click 'Next', then give the folder a name. Windows will suggest Shared, if that's what you called it on your old machine, but that's not very helpful on your current machine because you could have all sorts of shared folders on your local network and the internet. Change it to Remote Backup, then click Next, followed by Finish.

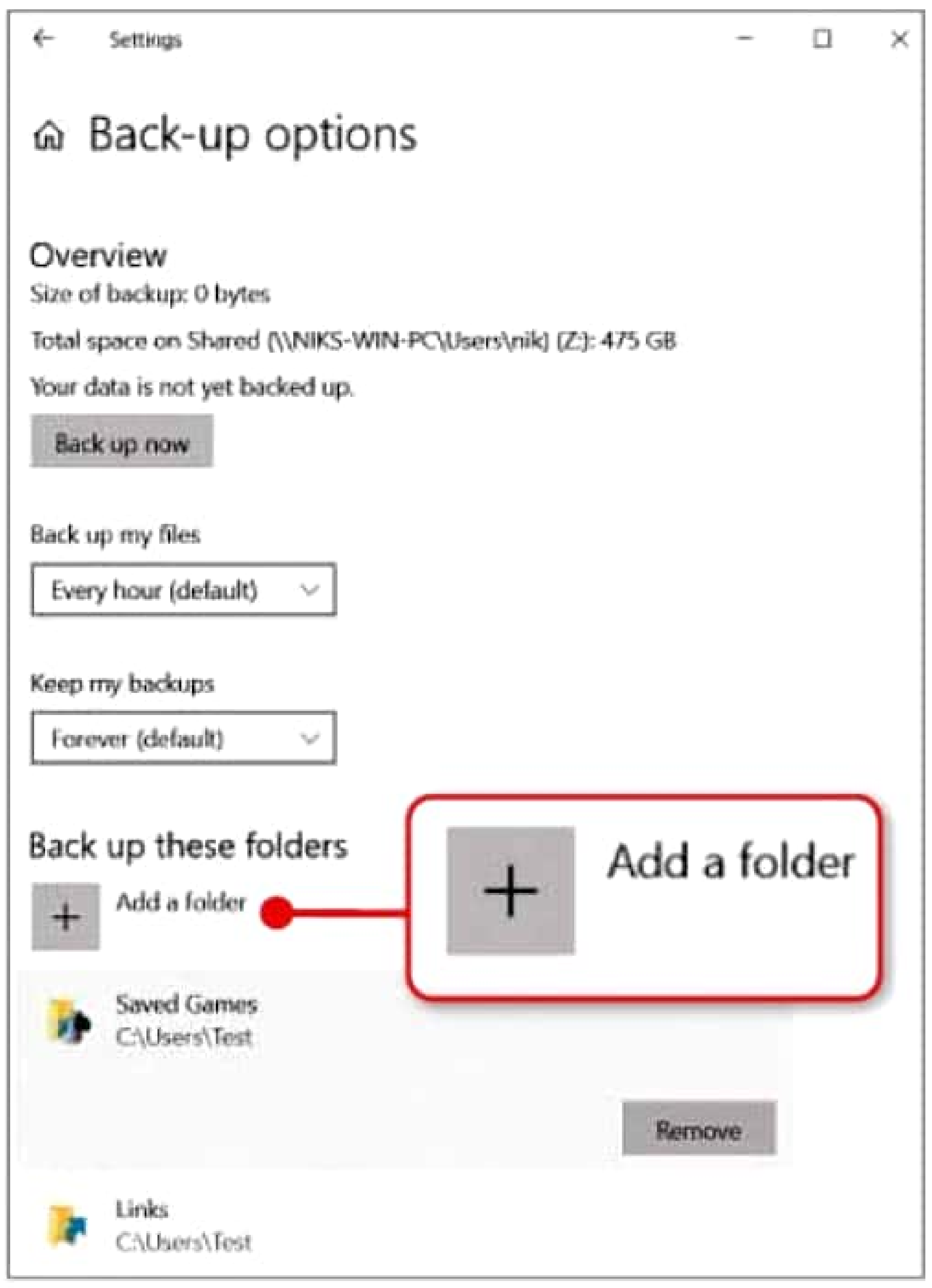
You'll now see that a new folder called Remote Backup has been created in the Explorer sidebar. It looks like it's stored locally on your computer as it appears under This PC, despite actually being on your old machine. You can now use it like any regular folder, copying files and other folders to it, at which point they'll be duplicated on your old machine.

To give it a drive letter, click the Computer tab at the top of the Explorer window, then click 'Map network drive'. Windows will suggest a drive letter (Z: in our screenshot below, which we'll stick with, but you can select an alternative if you prefer). Type the address of your remote folder in the Folder box and make sure 'Reconnect at sign-in' is ticked. This last step is very important as it will make sure the folder and its contents are available every time you start your new PC. Click Finish.

## 5

## Use File History to create a backup routine

What you've done, effectively, is create your own home-hosted online-storage service like Dropbox, OneDrive or Box. Any computer on your network should be able to see it, and anyone with access to the login details of your old machine will be able to store files in it. Of course, they'll all be stored in the same location, which might become confusing if multiple family members are saving in the same folder, but there's no reason why you couldn't set up a series of 'shared' folders by adding each person's name to the end of the folder name: 'Shared-Nik', for example. That way, each family member can connect to their own bespoke folder on the old machine, sharing its storage without getting their files mixed up with everyone else.



Back-up options

Overview
Size of backup: 0 bytes
Total space on Shared (\\NIKS-WIN-PC\Users\nik) (Z:): 475 GB
Your data is not yet backed up.

Back up my files: Every hour (default)

Keep my backups: Forever (default)

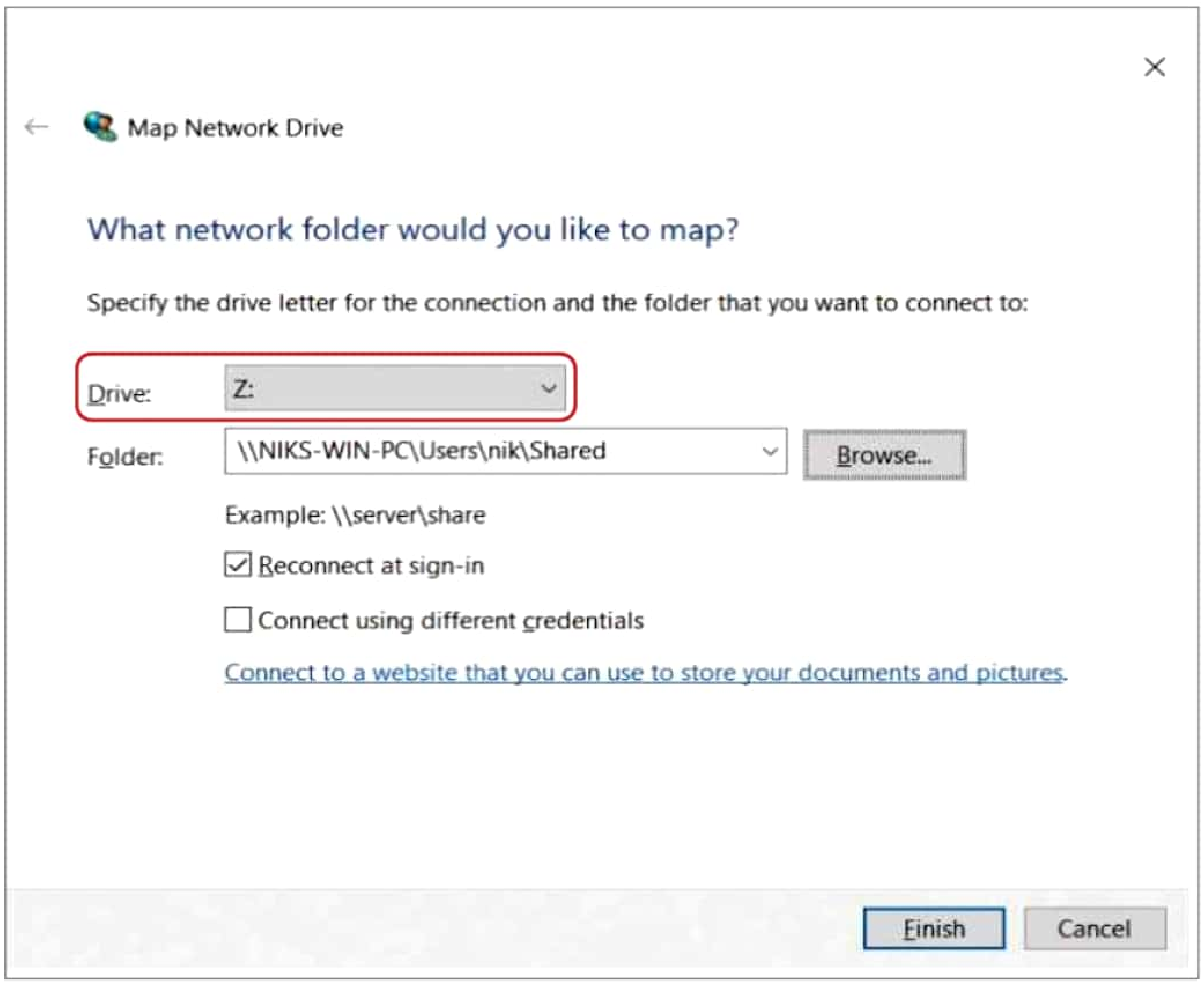
Back up these folders
Saved Games C:\Users\Test
Links C:\Users\Test

**Increase the number of folders being backed up within File History's settings.**

What we want to do, though, is use the remote shared folder as a backup destination. Press the Windows key and type backup, then click 'Backup settings'. In the top section – 'Back up using File History' – click 'Add a drive' and Windows will look for connected compatible destinations. Your internal hard drive isn't a valid option, so won't appear, but external hard drives and your mapped network drive will. Click it on the list.

Windows will now enable File History and start backing up your essential files, including the contents of your Pictures and Documents folders, to the shared folder on your old computer. If you want to increase the number of folders included in the backup, click 'More options', followed by 'Add a folder' (see screenshot above).

To stop backing up a particular directory, click it in the list of existing folders, then click Remove. Now that your backup process has been set up, you can move your old machine to its final resting place.



What network folder would you like to map?

Specify the drive letter for the connection and the folder that you want to connect to:

Drive: Z:

Folder: \\NIKS-WIN-PC\Users\nik\Shared

Example: \\server\share

☑ Reconnect at sign-in

☐ Connect using different credentials

Connect to a website that you can use to store your documents and pictures.

**Windows will assign a drive letter to your shared folder, letting you use it as a destination for your backups**

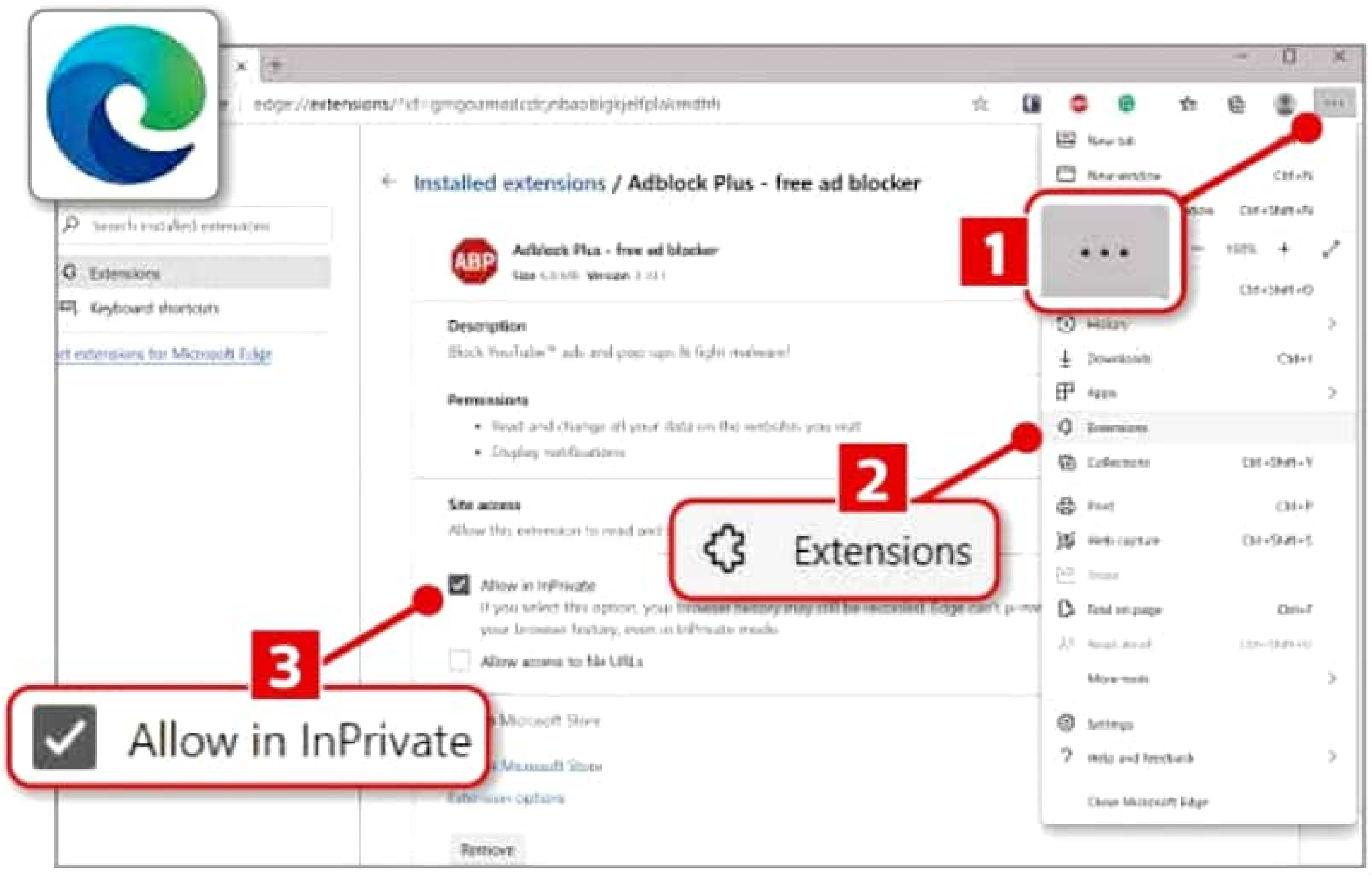
## Workshop 1

# Make web extensions work when you browse anonymously

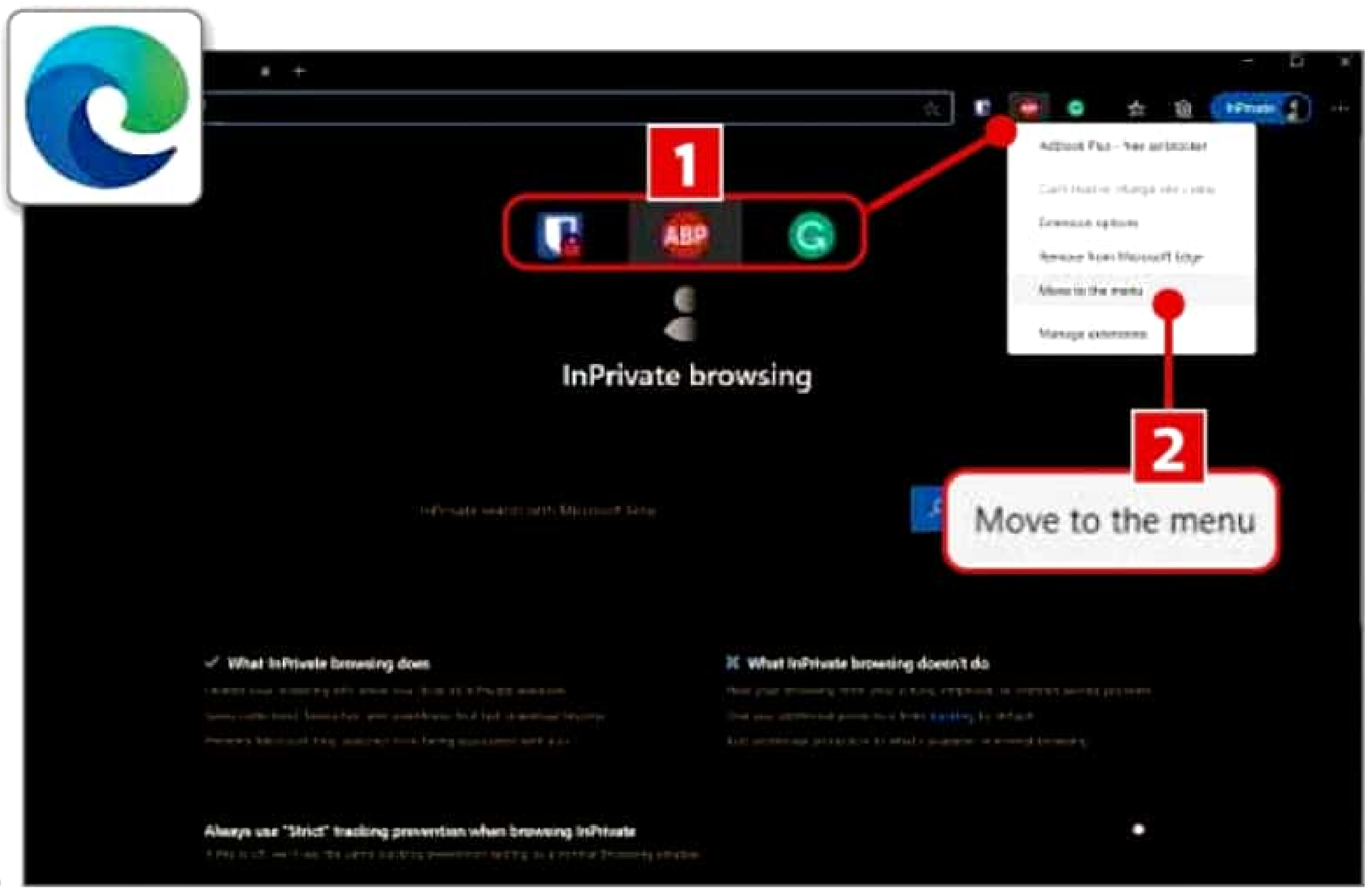
**What you need:** Any browser; Windows 7, 8.1 or 10
**Time required:** 15 minutes

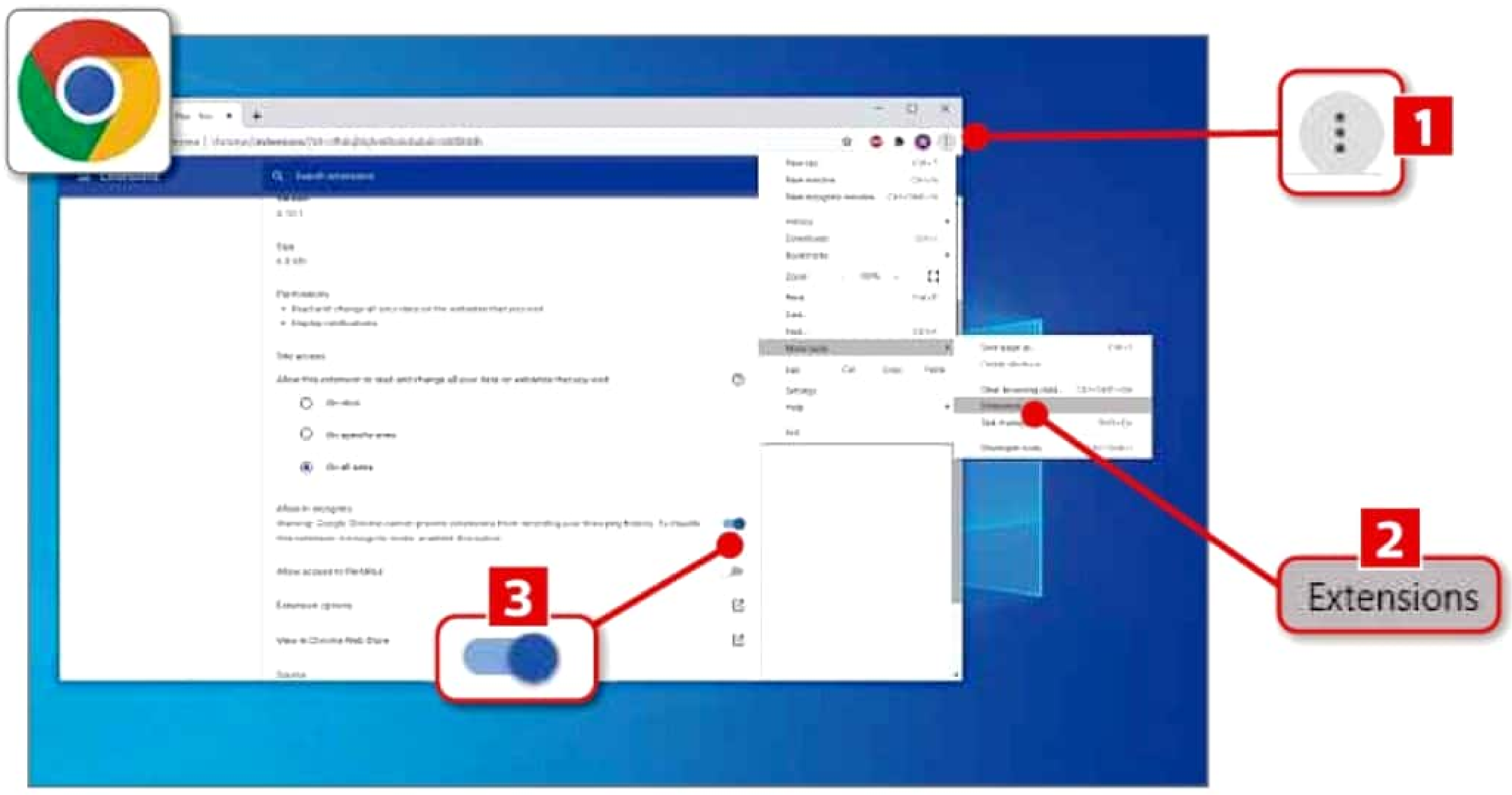
Although your browser's private browsing mode doesn't protect your anonymity as well as a VPN, it can still be useful. You can enable it when using a shared PC, for example, meaning other users won't be able to see which sites you've visited. However, your browser will disable all extensions when you're browsing privately, meaning you won't be able to use services such as your password manager or ad blocker. In this Workshop, we'll show you how to enable extensions in the private modes of all major browsers. Be aware that any you do activate may be able to track you, so only use those you trust.

**STEP 1** Open Edge (www.snipca.com/37159), then click the menu button (three horizontal dots 1), followed by Extensions 2. You'll now see a list of all installed extensions (including any you've disabled). Locate the extension you want to use while browsing privately, then click the Details button. In the window that opens, scroll down and tick the 'Allow in inPrivate' box 3. Repeat this for any other extensions you want to enable. As with all other browsers, Edge saves your settings as soon as you make them, so you can close this browser tab after you've made the changes.

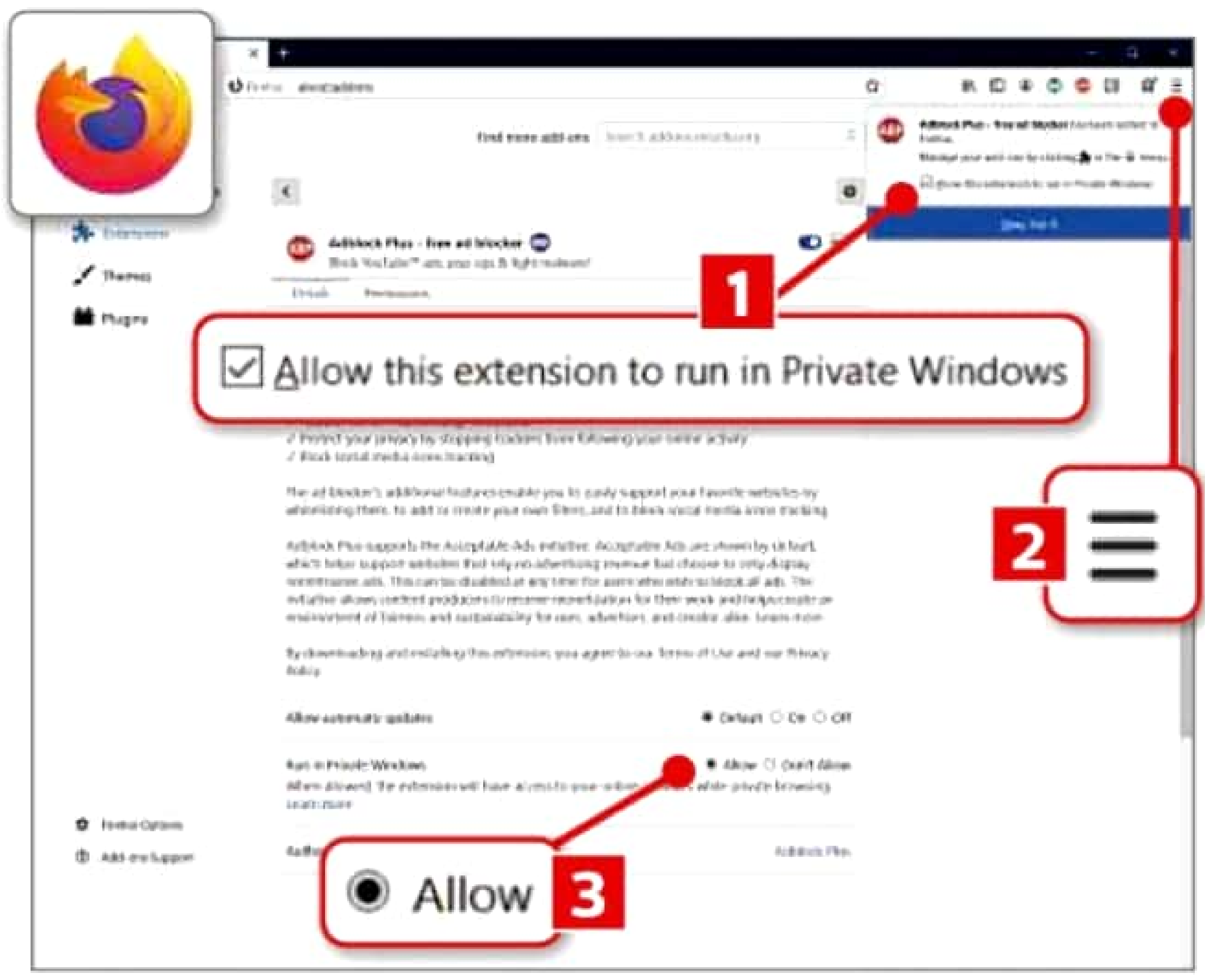


**STEP 2** To test your extensions are now working when browsing anonymously, open a private browser window in Edge by selecting 'New inPrivate window' from the menu or by pressing Ctrl+Shift+N. When the new window opens, you should see the icons 1 for the extensions you enabled in Step 1. You can hide an icon by right-clicking it, then selecting 'Move to the menu' 2, though we recommend leaving them visible as a reminder that they're still running even in private mode.



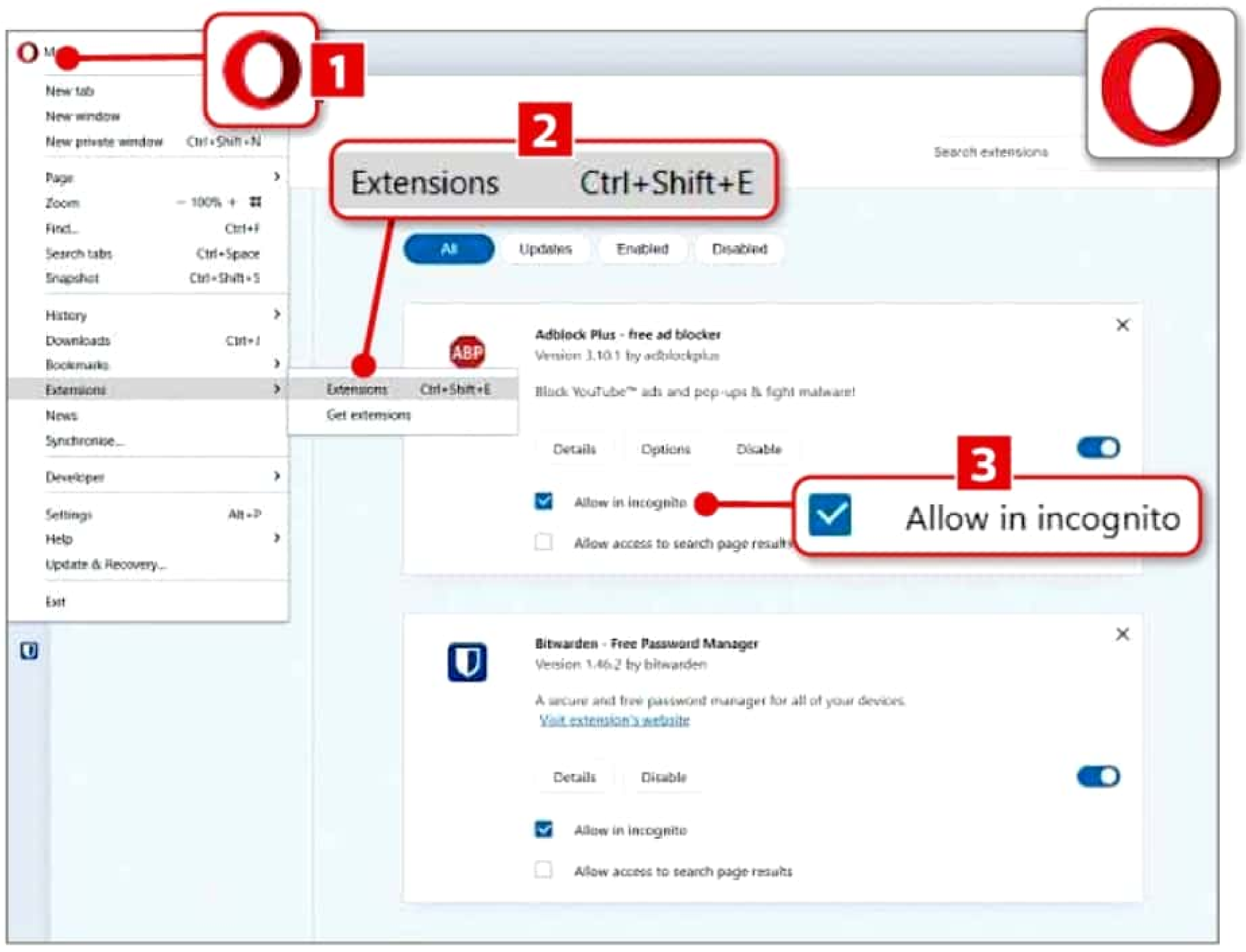


**STEP 3** Enabling extensions in private browsing in Chrome (www.snipca.com/37160) is similar. First, click the menu button (three vertical dots 1) and select 'More tools', followed by Extensions 2. Find the relevant Chrome extension, then click the Details button. In the window that opens, scroll down the list of options to the 'Allow in incognito' section, then click the slider to turn it on 3.



## STEP 4

Firefox (www.firefox.com) lets you set an extension to work in private windows immediately after you install it – look for the pop-up window that appears (top right), then tick the 'Allow this extension to run in Private Windows' box 1. To enable extensions you've already installed, click the menu button (three vertical lines 2), followed by Add-ons, then Extensions. Click the relevant extension, set 'Run in Private Windows' to Allow 3, then open a private window (by pressing Ctrl+Shift+P).

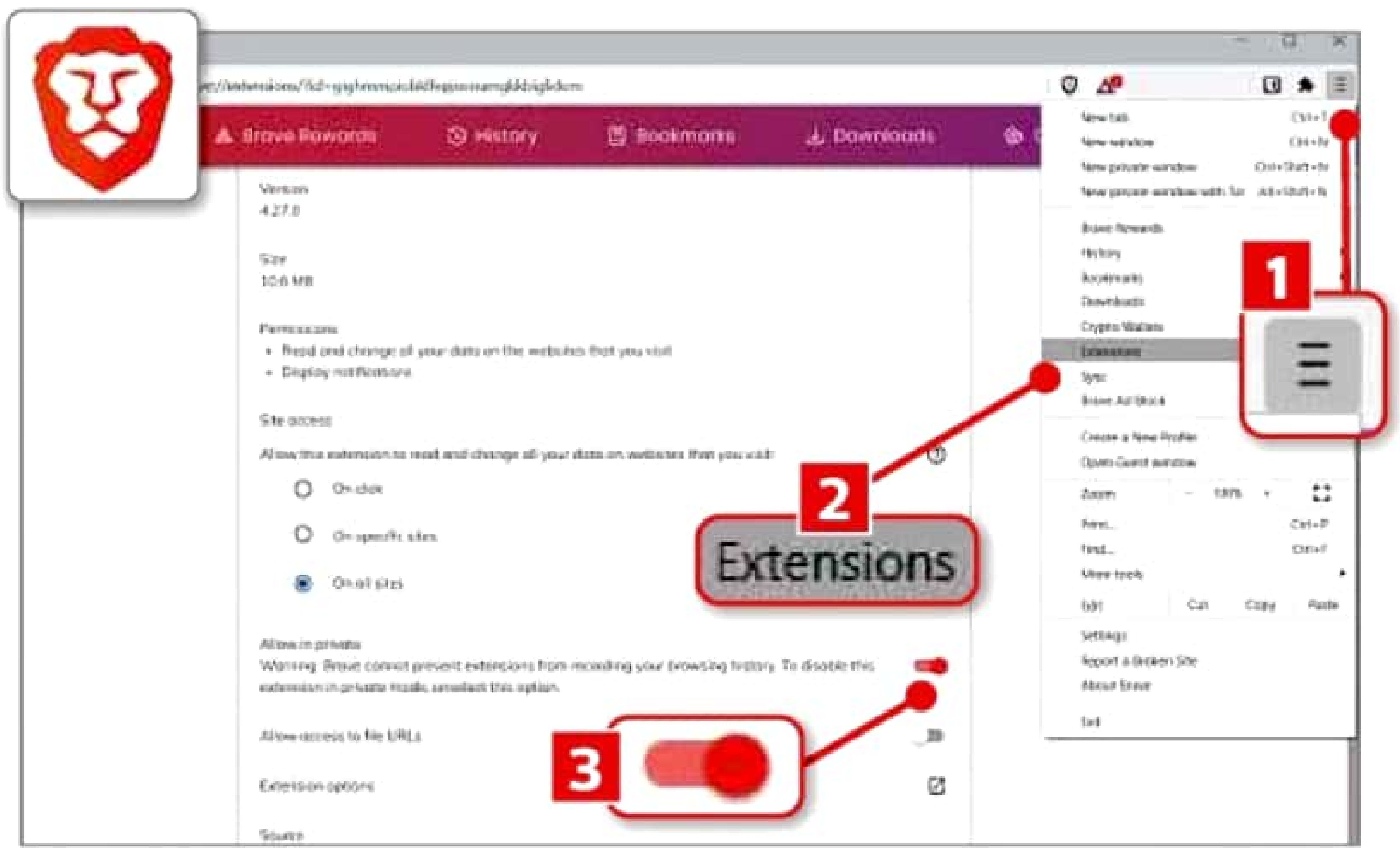


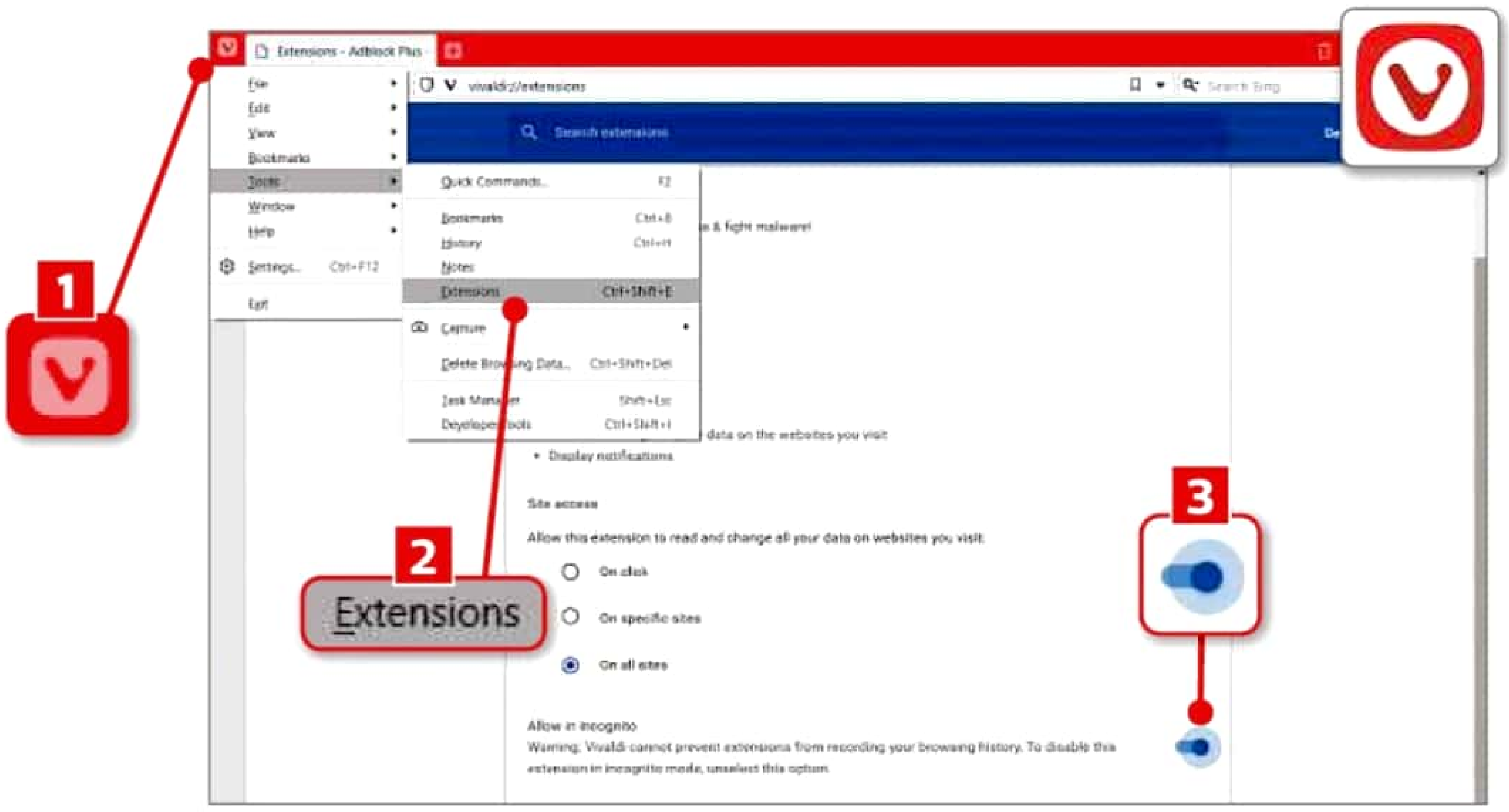
## STEP 5

Opera offers something other browsers don't – a built-in VPN. It's only available in private browsing windows - press Ctrl+Shift+N to open one, then the VPN button in the address bar. To enable private browsing extensions in Opera (www.opera.com), click the Opera logo 1, then Extensions, followed by Extensions 2 again. Your extensions will be listed in the window that opens. Tick the 'Allow in incognito' box 3 under those you want to use in your private browsing windows.

## STEP 6

As recommended in Issue 597's Stop Using Google Cover Feature, Brave (www.brave.com) focuses on privacy and security. It blocks all ad trackers by default (the only browser to do so) and prevents 'fingerprinting' - a process that some websites use to build up a profile on you based on your PC's hardware, the programs installed on it and more. Brave is based on Google's Chromium source code, so the process of allowing extensions in private windows is similar to Chrome. Click the menu button (three vertical lines 1), then Extensions 2. From here, click Details under the extension you want to enable, then click the slider next to 'Allow in private' 3 to turn it on.





## STEP 7

Vivaldi (www.vivaldi.com) is the least popular of the browsers here, with around 1.5 million users. However, if you enjoy customising how your browser looks, it's worth trying (you can ditch toolbars you don't need, place your tabs down the side of the window and more). You can also enable extensions in private windows. Click the Vivaldi logo 1, Tools, then Extensions 2. Click the Details button on the relevant extensions, then click the slider next to 'Allow in incognito' 3.

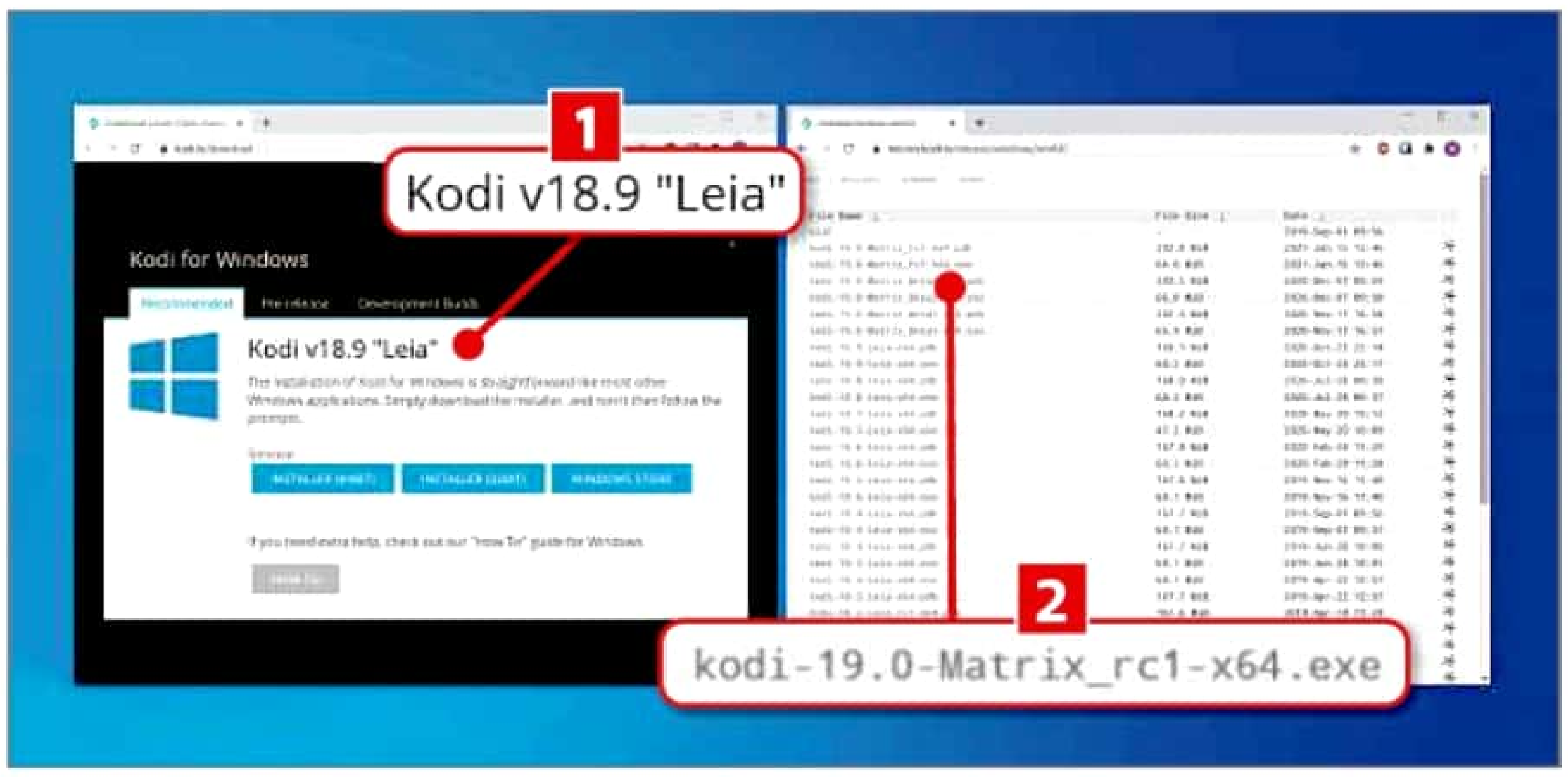
## Workshop 2

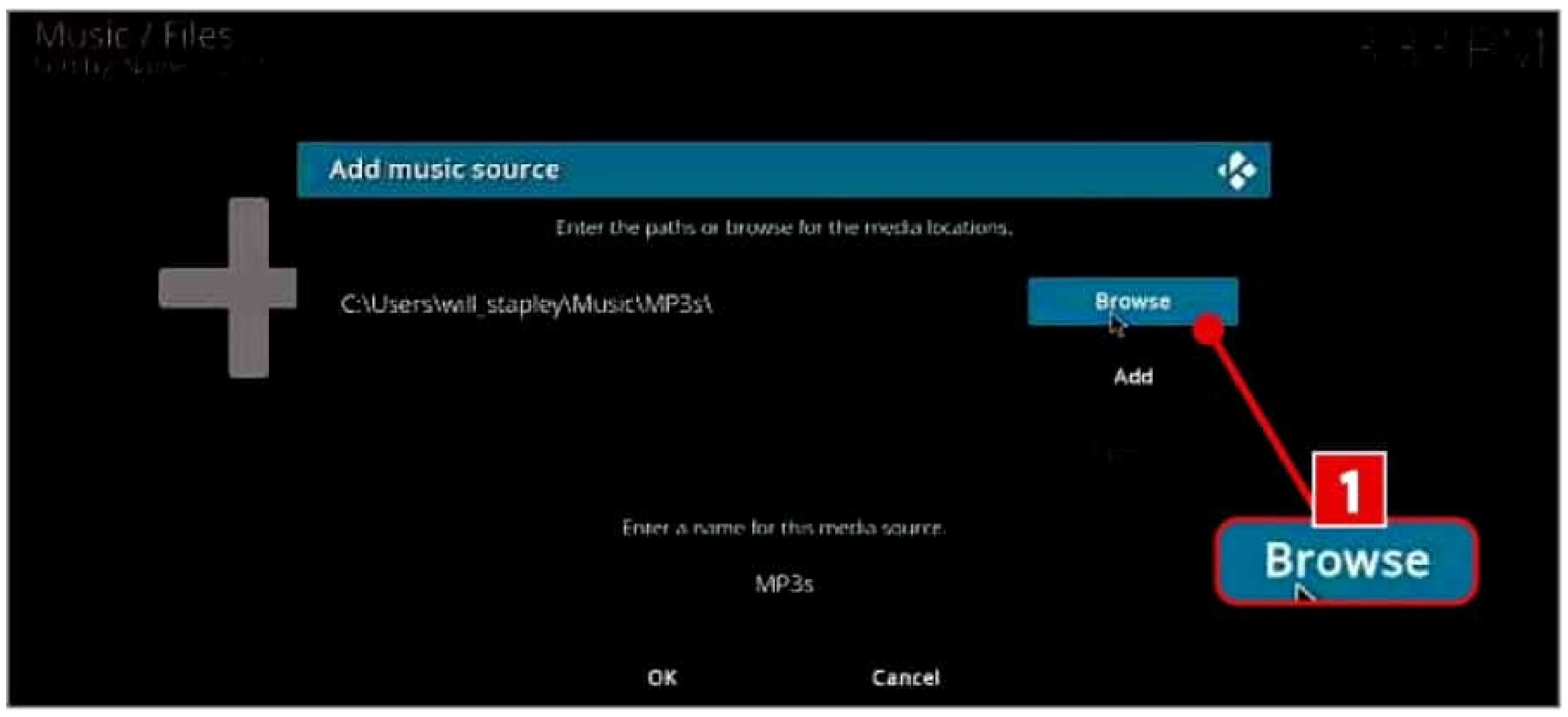
# Master the new Kodi

**What you need:** Kodi; Windows 7, 8.1 or 10
**Time required:** 30 minutes

While Plex (www.plex.tv, see our Cover Feature, Issue 590) streams your PC's media library to other devices, such as your phone and TV, Kodi is designed to let you enjoy your music, photos and videos on the computer it's running on. It also lets you access a wide range of content using free add-ons. In this Workshop, we'll show you how to use the 'release candidate' version of the new Kodi 19 (which means it's in the final test stage. It worked flawlessly in our tests).

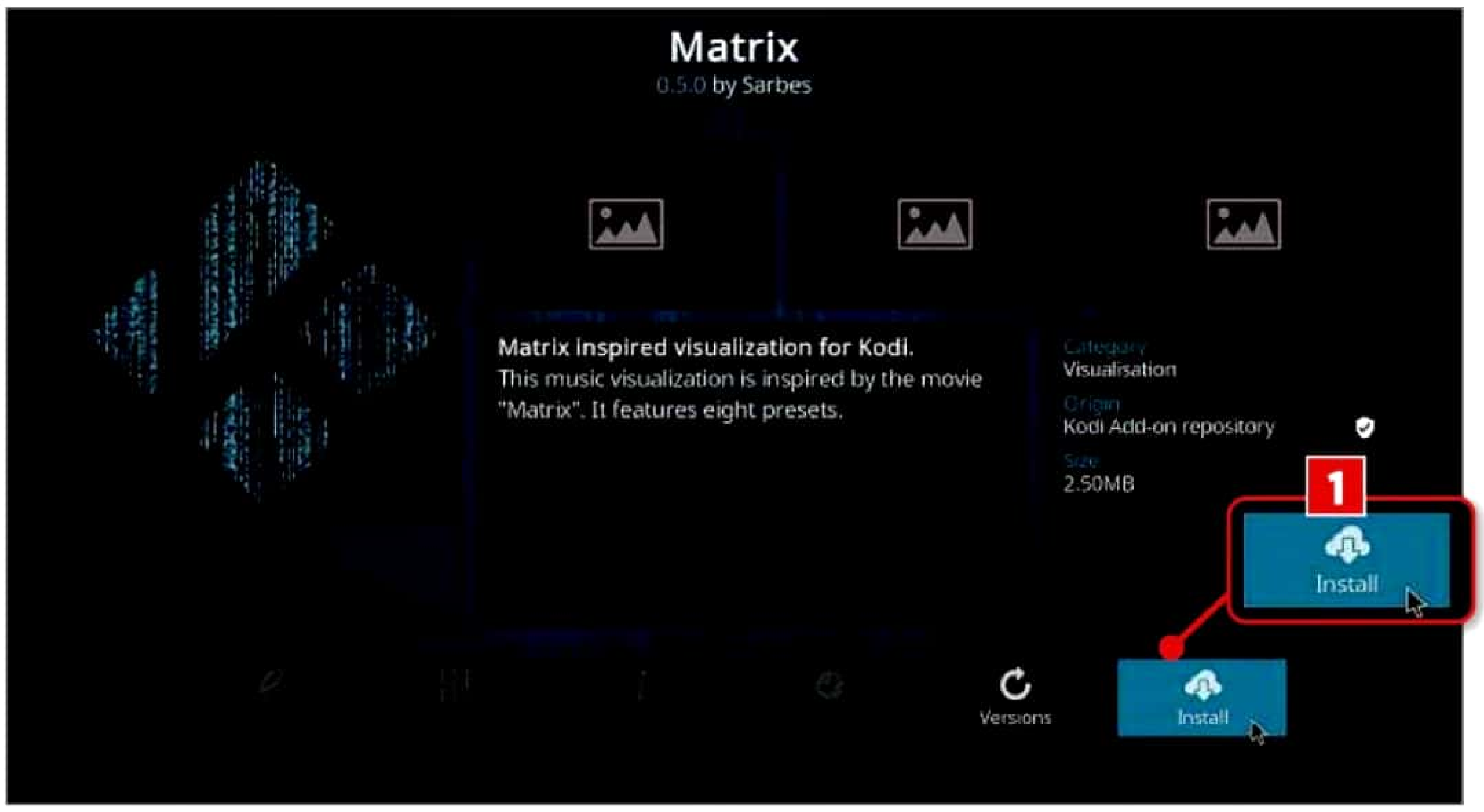
**STEP 1** First, check whether Kodi 19 is available from the Kodi downloads page at www.snipca.com/37207 (scroll down, click the Windows logo and if you see an option to download Kodi 19, select the 32bit or 64bit version then install it). However, if it still shows Kodi 18.9 **1**, you'll need to download the release candidate (which we're using here) by going to www.snipca.com/37208. To download the 32bit version, select the win32 folder and download kodi-19.0-Matrix_rc1-x86.exe; for 64bit, select win64 and kodi-19.0-Matrix_rc1-x64.exe **2**. Run the EXE file and follow the installation process.


1
Kodi v18.9 "Leia"
Kodi for Windows
Kodi v18.9 "Leia"
2
kodi-19.0-Matrix_rc1-x64.exe


Music / Files
Add music source
Enter the paths or browse for the media locations.
C:\Users\will_stapley\Music\MP3s\
Browse
Add
Enter a name for this media source.
MP3s
OK
Cancel
1
Browse

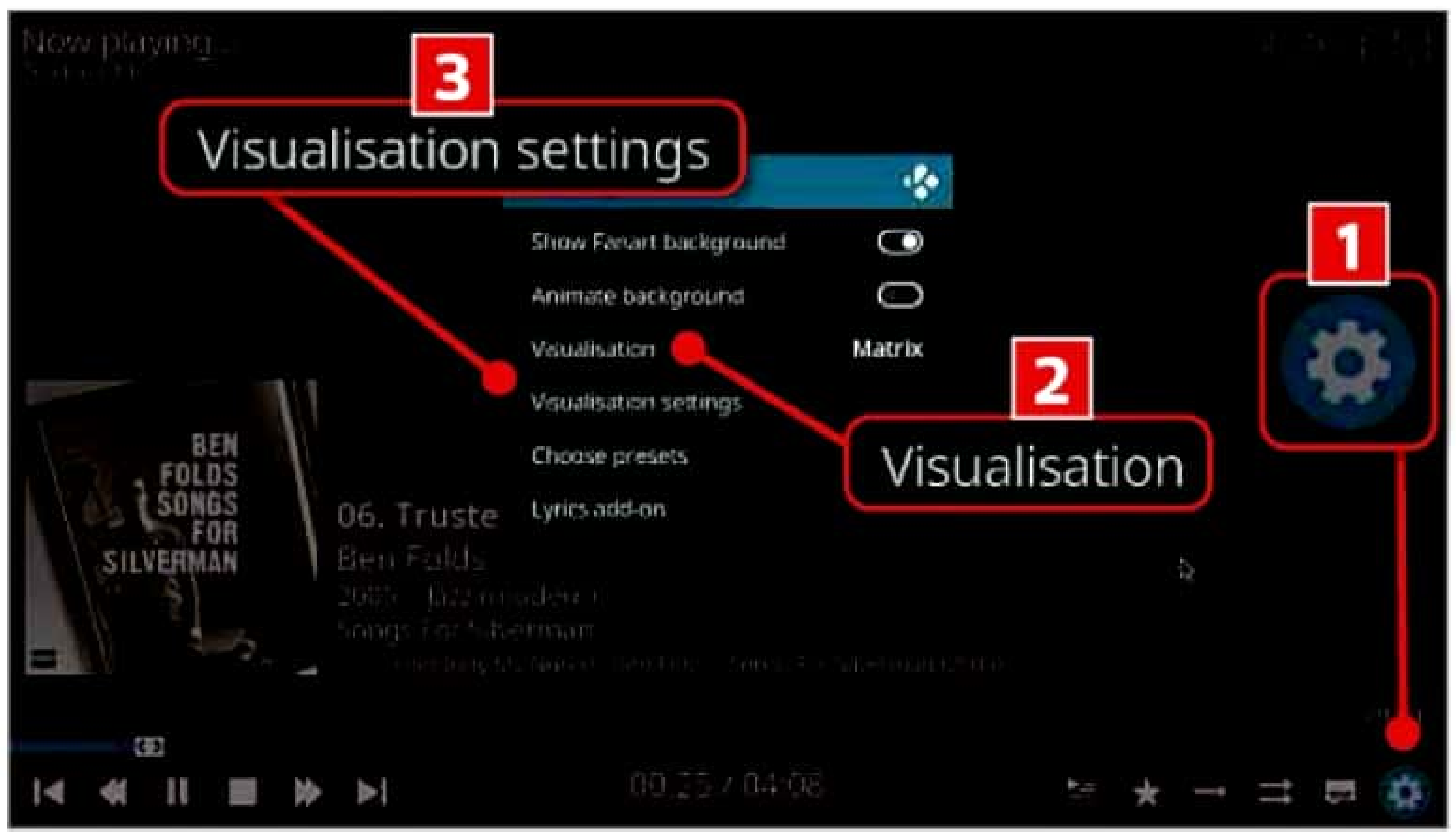
**STEP 2** If you're installing Kodi for the first time, you'll need to tell it where to find your music, video and photo files. Click the Settings (cog) button on the home screen, then select Media. In the Manage Sources section at the top, click 'Videos...', 'Add videos...', then Browse **1** and navigate to your videos folder. Repeat this process for the 'Music...' and 'Pictures...' options. Now return to the main menu (press Escape to move back through menus), then use the options in the left-hand sidebar to access your media (you may need to scroll down to view all options).

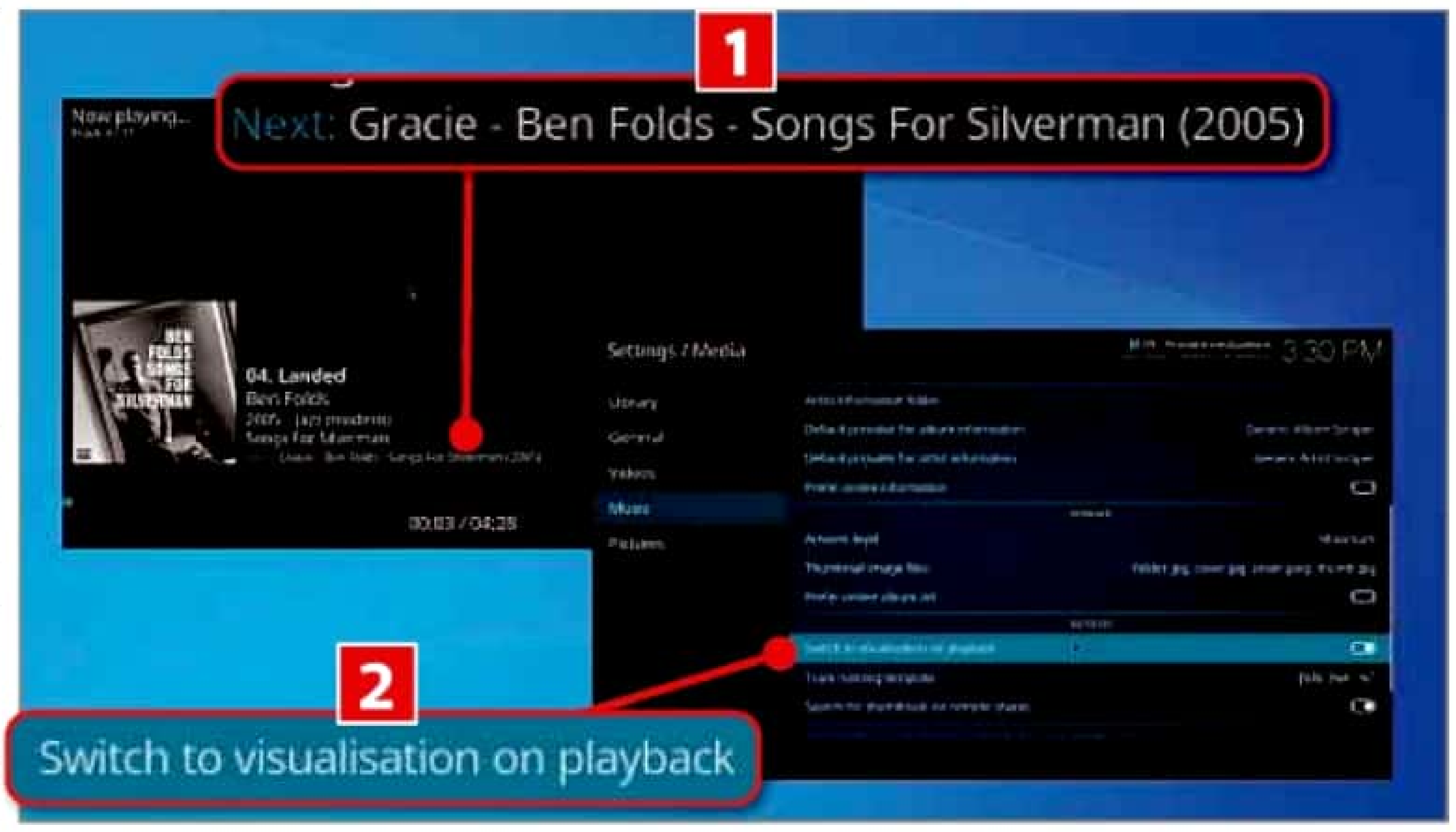
**STEP 3** Kodi 19 comes with an enhanced visualisation tool, which adds graphics that animate in time with your music. To use it, you first need to install a visualisation theme, so click Settings, Add-ons, 'Install from repository', then scroll down and select 'Look and feel'. In the window that opens, click Visualisation, then browse the list – the Matrix theme (based on the sci-fi films) is new to version 19. Once you've selected your visualisation, click Install **1**. You can repeat this process to install all available themes (we particularly like MilkDrop – a colourful theme originally designed for the Winamp media player).



Matrix inspired visualization for Kodi.
This music visualization is inspired by the movie "Matrix". It features eight presets.

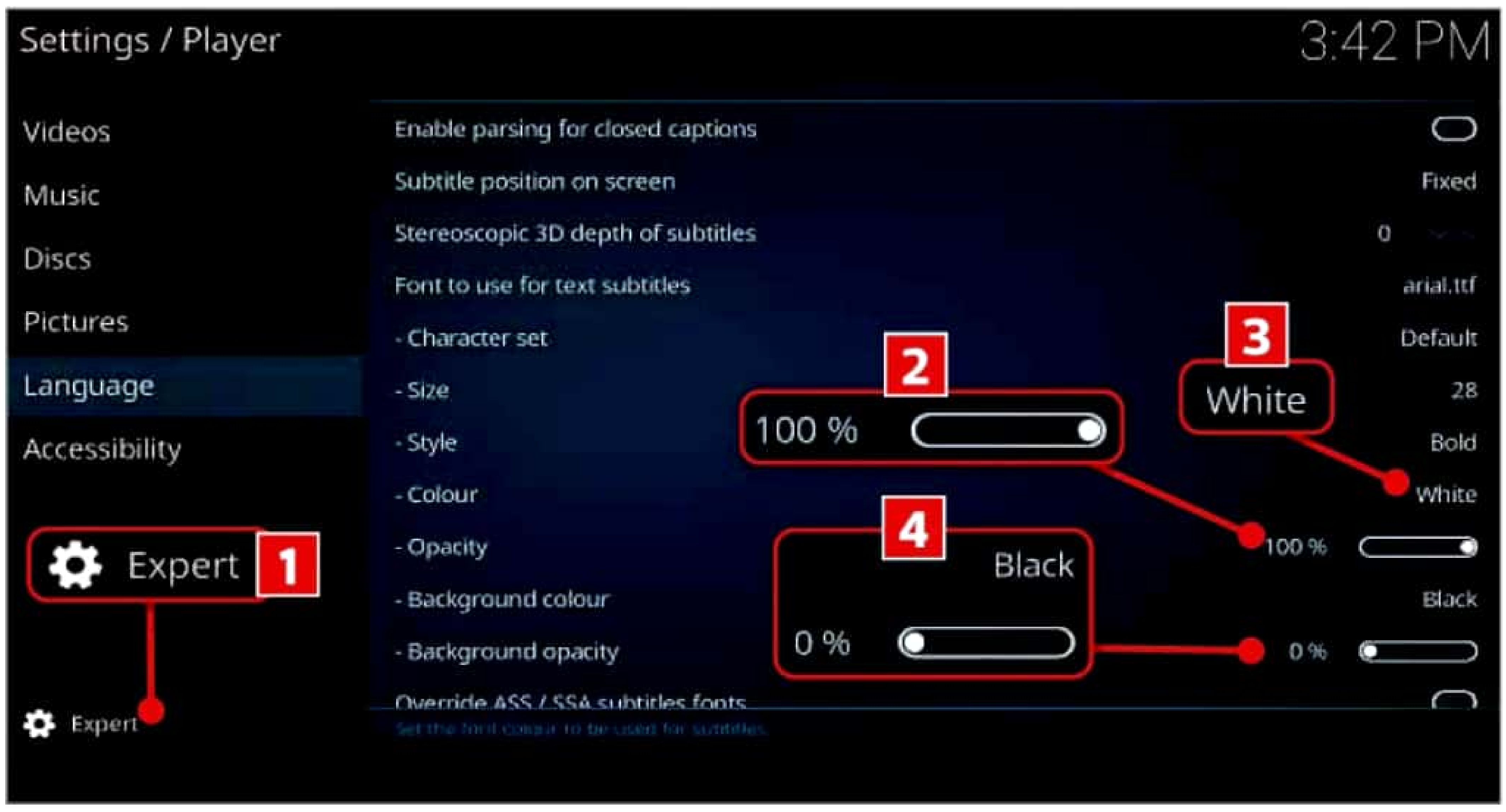
Matrix
0.5.0 by Sarbes
Category
Visualisation
Origin
Kodi Add-on repository
Size
2.50MB
1
Install
Versions
Install


3
Visualisation settings
1
2
Visualisation
Show Fanart background
Animate background
Visualisation
Matrix
Visualisation settings
Choose presets
Lyrics add-on
06. Truste
Ben Folds
00:25 / 04:08


1
Next: Gracie - Ben Folds - Songs For Silverman (2005)
04. Landed
Ben Folds
00:03 / 04:28
Settings / Media
3:30 PM
2
Switch to visualisation on playback

**STEP 4** Return to the main menu (press Escape twice), click Music in the left-hand sidebar, then choose a track. Press the Tab key to switch to the Now Playing window, then click the Settings cog in the bottom-right corner of the screen 1. In the Settings window that opens, click Visualisation 2, then select from the themes you installed in Step 3. Depending on your selected theme, you may be able to tweak it – click the Settings cog again, then 'Visualisation settings' 3. For the new Matrix theme, for example, you can adjust the size of the pixels, the choice of colours and more.

**STEP 5** Another new feature in version 19 is that it displays more information when playing music. If you're playing a track from an album or playlist, you'll see the name of the current track, along with the one up next 1. Kodi also now displays extra metadata, including the format (such as MP3) and bitrate, which indicates the quality of the track. You can also set Kodi to immediately switch to full-screen view of your chosen visualisation when playing a track – return to the main menu, go to Settings, Media, Music, then turn on 'Switch to visualisation on playback' 2.


Settings / Player 3:42 PM

Videos
Music
Discs
Pictures
Language
Accessibility

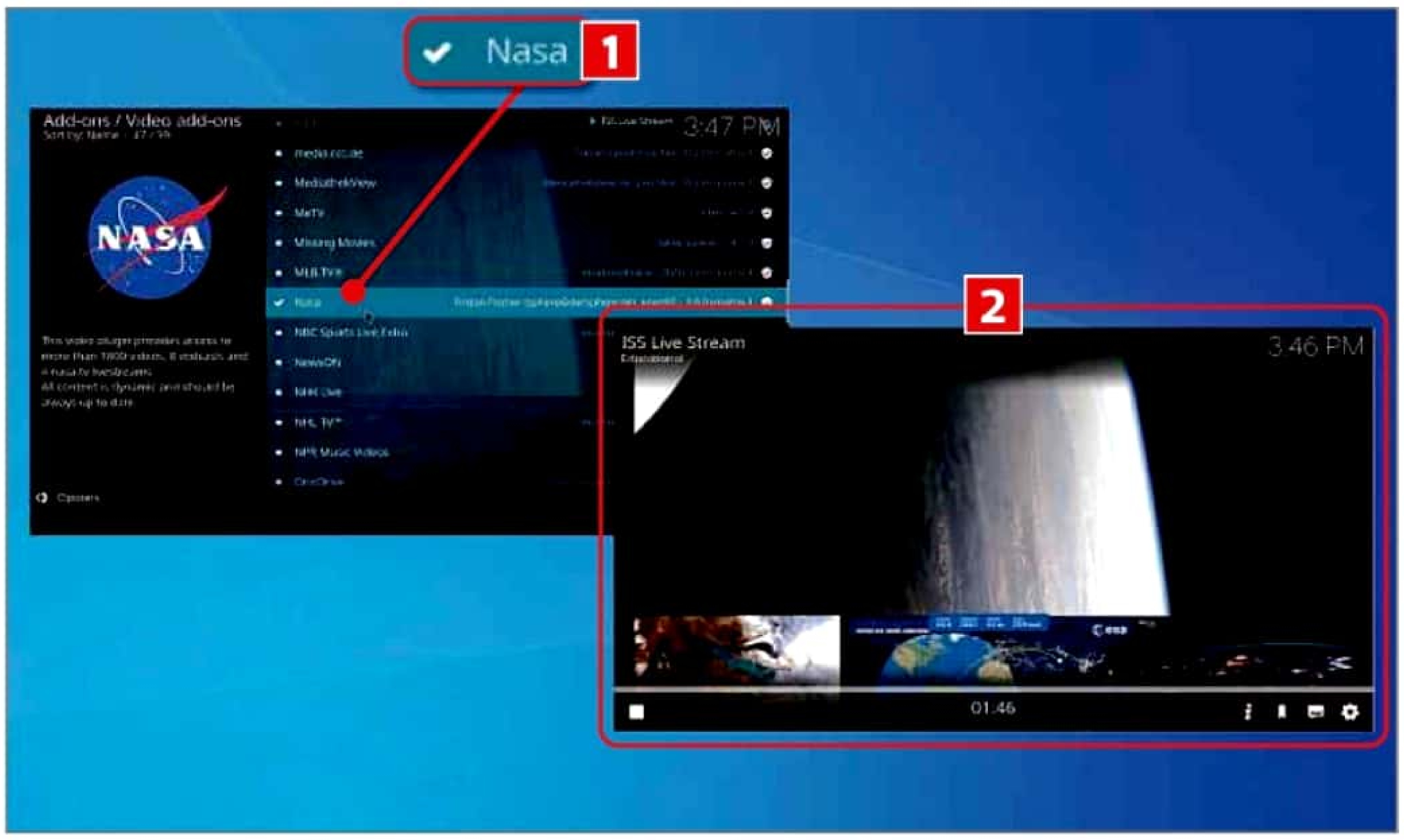
| | |
|---|---|
| Enable parsing for closed captions | ○ |
| Subtitle position on screen | Fixed |
| Stereoscopic 3D depth of subtitles | 0 |
| Font to use for text subtitles | arial.ttf |
| - Character set | Default |
| - Size | 28 |
| - Style | Bold |
| - Colour | White |
| - Opacity | 100 % |
| - Background colour | Black |
| - Background opacity | 0 % |
| Override ASS / SSA subtitles fonts | ○ |

Expert

Expert 1
2
100 %
3
White
4
Black
0 %

**STEP 6** Version 19 lets you make subtitles easier to view (to show subtitles for films and TV shows, select Subtitles from the Add-ons menu, then install the OpenSubtitles.org add-on). Click 'Settings' in the main menu, followed by Player, then Language. To view the new settings, you need to change the menu view to Expert (click the box repeatedly until it reads Expert 1). Scroll down the settings in the Subtitles section and you'll see new options including changing the transparency level of the subtitle text 2 and its colour 3. As with previous versions of Kodi, you can also adjust the colour and opacity of the subtitle's background box 4.

**STEP 7** Once you've got to grips with the new features, you can try installing more add-ons. Avoid the unofficial Kodi add-ons that let you illegally watch paid-for content for free. Instead, stick to those listed in Kodi – such as Nasa's TV channel – which are all legal. To install it, click Settings in the main menu, Add-ons, 'Install from repository', 'Video add-ons' then select Nasa 1 in the list and click Install. Now return to the main menu, select Videos, 'Video add-ons', then select Nasa in the list (when prompted, install the YouTube add-on – you'll only need to do this once). Finally, choose which stream to watch, such as the live International Space Station stream 2.


✔ Nasa 1
Add-ons / Video add-ons
3:47 PM
NASA
2
ISS Live Stream
3:46 PM
01:46

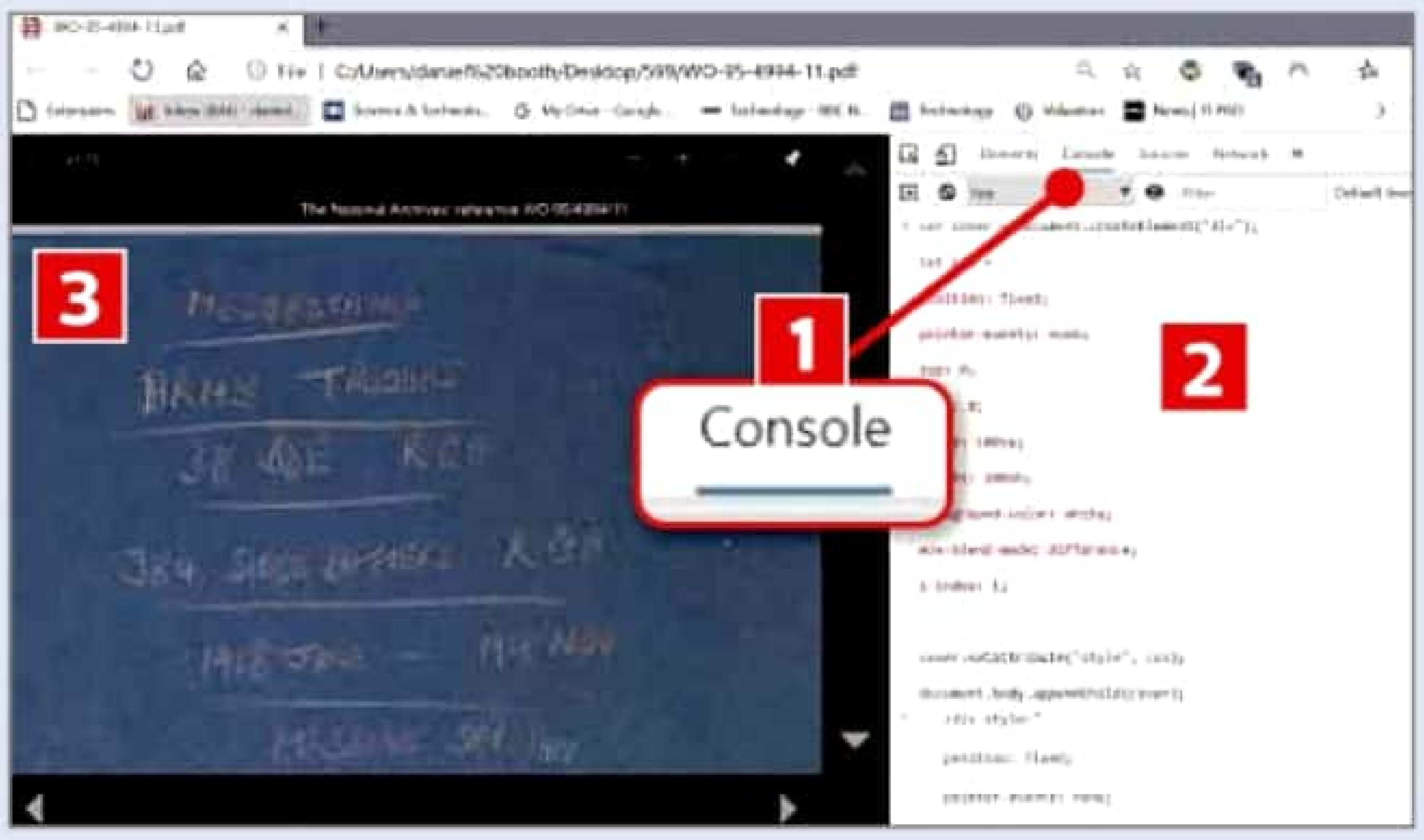
# Readers' Tips

**TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT**

## Invert PDF colours so they're easier to read

I've been keeping myself entertained during the latest lockdown by reading World War One unit diaries from The National Archives, as you recommended in Issue 597's Grow Your Family Tree column. As you rightly say, they're fascinating to read, but they can stretch to hundreds of pages for each volume. After a while, I found them a strain on my eyes.

A fix for this is to invert the colours in the pages of the PDF, so they appear white on black, not black on white. To do this, first download the unit diary you need (or indeed any PDF you want to invert), then open it in Chrome or Edge. You now need to change the code on the page. Do this by first pressing Shift+Ctrl+I to bring up a box of code on the right.



Next, click the Console tab at the top (**1** in our screenshot), then visit this Pastebin link (www.snipca.com/37188) and copy the code from it (from lines 1 to 27). Now paste this into the empty Console box **2** in Chrome or Edge and press Enter. Your pages should now appear inverted **3**. This effect is only temporary. When you next open a PDF the colour scheme should be back to normal.

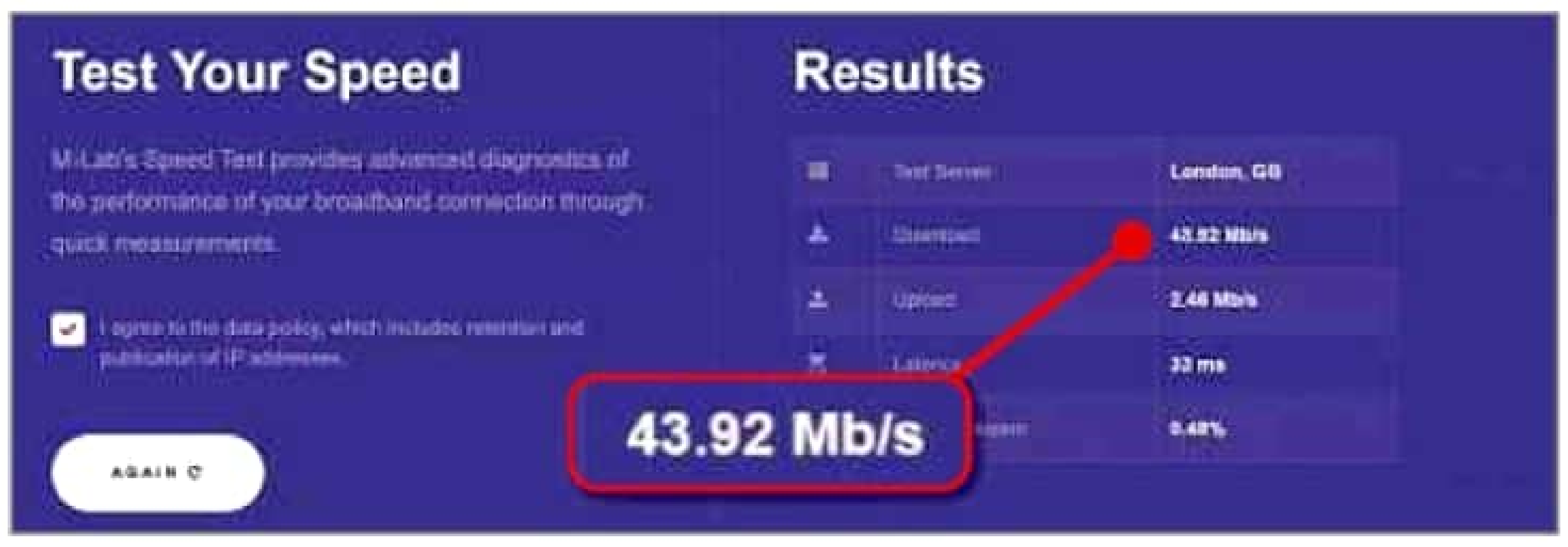
**Ben Steadman**

**Ben wins a copy of our 2020 Back Issue CD** **Buy it on Amazon www.snipca.com/37026**

**BROADBAND**

### Try M-Lab's speed test if Google's won't work

Your 'Get Your Fastest Wi-Fi' Cover Feature in Issue 595 gave me lots of ideas on how to boost my signal at home, but one thing you mentioned didn't work. I tried typing speed test into Google, as you recommended, but the Run Speed Test button didn't appear.



M-Lab's Speed Test provides advanced diagnostics of the performance of your broadband connection through quick measurements.

☑ I agree to the data policy, which includes retention and publication of IP addresses.

| | |
|---|---|
| Test Server | London, GB |
| Download | 43.92 Mb/s |
| Upload | 2.46 Mb/s |
| Latency | 32 ms |
| Retransmission | 0.48% |

I dug around on the internet and discovered that Google hasn't made this test available everywhere. There's nothing unusual about that, but what's odd is that it works in some regions of the UK, but not others. Some people think this is down to whether Google has a server that's near enough to run the test.

Anyway, I found a workaround. Visit https://speed.measurementlab.net, tick the data policy box, and click Begin. You'll see your results on the right (it's just under 44Mbps in the screenshot).

This particular test is run by M-Lab, which provides the test service for Google, so it's a roundabout way of running the Google test. I've found that in places where the Google test didn't appear, the M-Lab test did. You can of course bypass Google completely and try other sites, such as Speedtest (www.speedtest.net).

**Ian Broad**

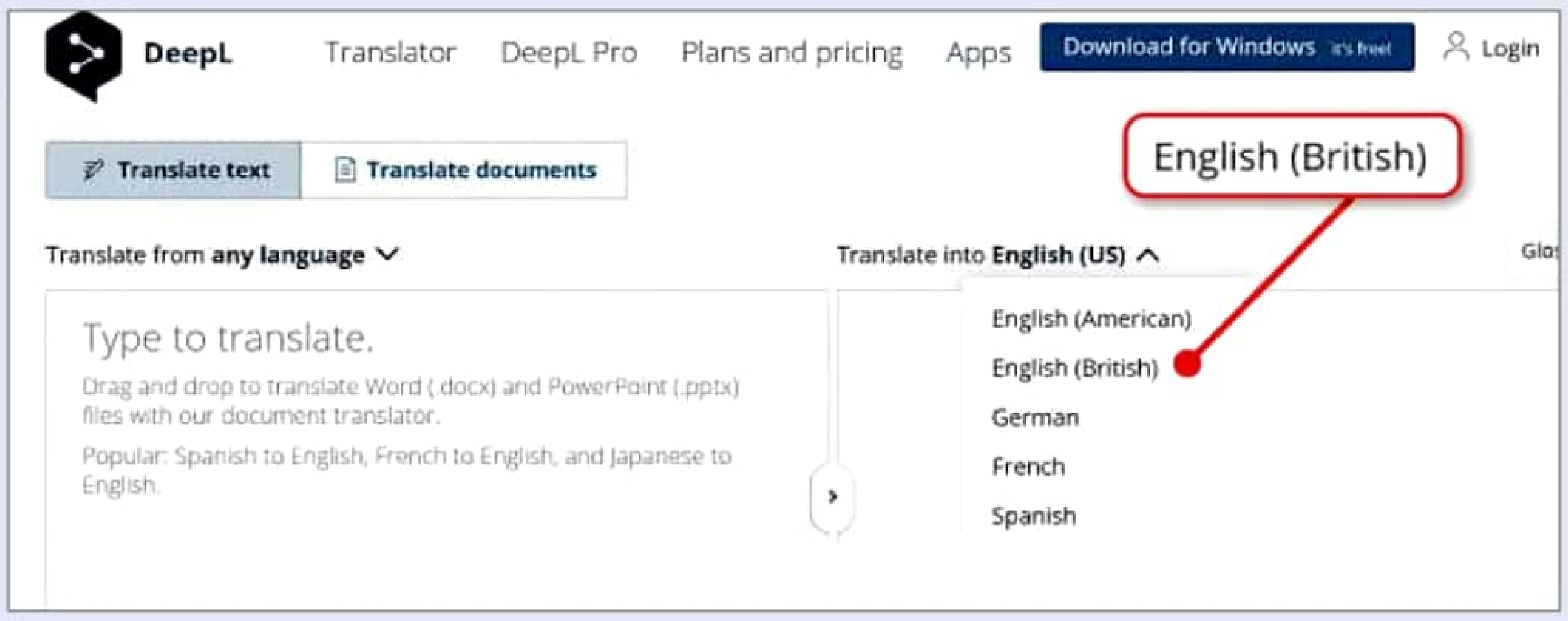
## Why I stopped using...

### Google Translate

Thank you for your in-depth and timely look at alternatives to Google (Cover Feature, Issue 597). Like many, I'm sick of Google's monopoly, but always assumed I'd never find anything better than Google Translate.

### And what I use instead...

One service you didn't mention in your feature is **DeepL Translate** (www.deepltranslate.com), which I now use instead of Google Translate. I gave it a go when I read that your translation is deleted immediately, thereby upholding your privacy.



Translate from **any language**

Translate into **English (US)**

Type to translate.

Drag and drop to translate Word (.docx) and PowerPoint (.pptx) files with our document translator.

Popular: Spanish to English, French to English, and Japanese to English.

I mostly use the website, though you can download a version to your desktop also. As you type in the left-hand box, you see the translation in the right.

By default it translates to 'English (American)', so make sure you change this to 'English (British)' – see screenshot.

**Ryan Collins**

Tell us why you stopped using a website, app or program: letters@computeractive.co.uk

# Handy hints and tips from your fellow readers

✉ **Email us your tips:** letters@computeractive.co.uk

## Reader recommends...

### Zoostorm Ryzen 5 Pro

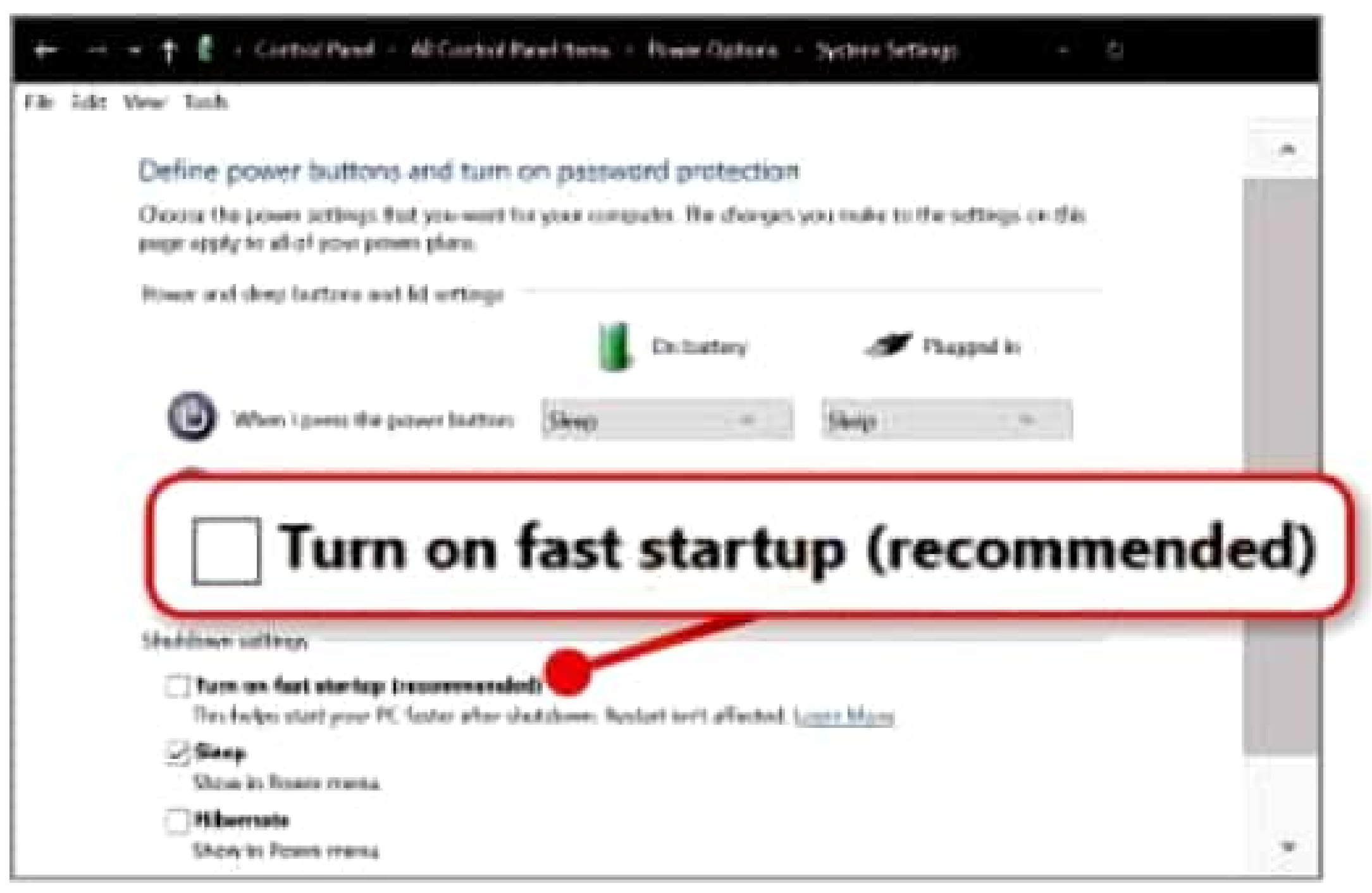
**£800** from Ergo www.snipca.com/36658

✓ When my old Dell PC conked out in the autumn, I vowed that my replacement would have Wi-Fi 6 built in. With my two sons getting more into watching YouTube on their own, I knew my bandwidth needed a boost. Wi-Fi 6 seems to provide the answer, so I was drawn to Zoostorm's Ryzen 5 Pro, which you reviewed in Issue 595 (page 22).

You said it was fast for Windows 10 tasks, and so it has proved. I use it as my main work PC, and have been impressed by how more responsive it is than my ancient Dell. It comes with Windows 10 Pro, hence the name, and also ticks the Wi-Fi 6 box, though we can't take advantage of that until we get a compatible router, probably some time this year. But that doesn't bother me for now. This is a PC for the next decade.

**William Castle**

✉ Want to recommend hardware or software to fellow readers?
Email letters@computeractive.co.uk



Control Panel › All Control Panel Items › Power Options › System Settings
File Edit View Tools
Define power buttons and turn on password protection
Power and sleep buttons and lid settings
On battery
Plugged in
When I press the power button
Sleep
Sleep
Shutdown settings

☐ Turn on fast startup (recommended)

☑ Sleep

☐ Hibernate

WINDOWS

## Turn off 'Fast startup' so USB drives work properly

✓ I recently fixed a problem that had been bothering me for years. I have an old HP EliteDesk 8300 Ultra Slim PC that's not particularly fast, but does what I need it to do. I have it set up to work as a Plex media server, using a couple of external 2TB hard drives running via USB 3.0.

I've always noticed that after upgrading versions of Windows the drives started to run slowly. I eventually came across a small program called USBTreeView (www.snipca.com/37171) which shows the USB devices on a computer in greater detail. It showed me that my USB 3.0 drives were showing up as USB 2.0.

After much searching on the internet, I discovered that the 'Fast startup' setting in Windows 10 was to blame. It boots your PC quickly, but as a result struggles to load all required drivers, including in my case the USB 3.0 drivers. The setting is on by default in Windows, and it only happens from a cold boot and not a restart.

Having turned off this setting, my file-transfer speeds are up to four times faster. I disabled it by pressing Windows key+X then selecting Power Options from the menu. Next, on the far right, click 'Additional power settings' and on the next page click 'Choose what the power buttons do'.

Next, untick the 'Turn on fast startup' box (see screenshot above). If it's greyed out, you'll first need to click the small blue 'Change settings that are currently unavailable' link at the top. Once that's done, click 'Save changes'.

**Stephen Oram**

MUSIC

## Edit 'Contributing artists' to play music in your car

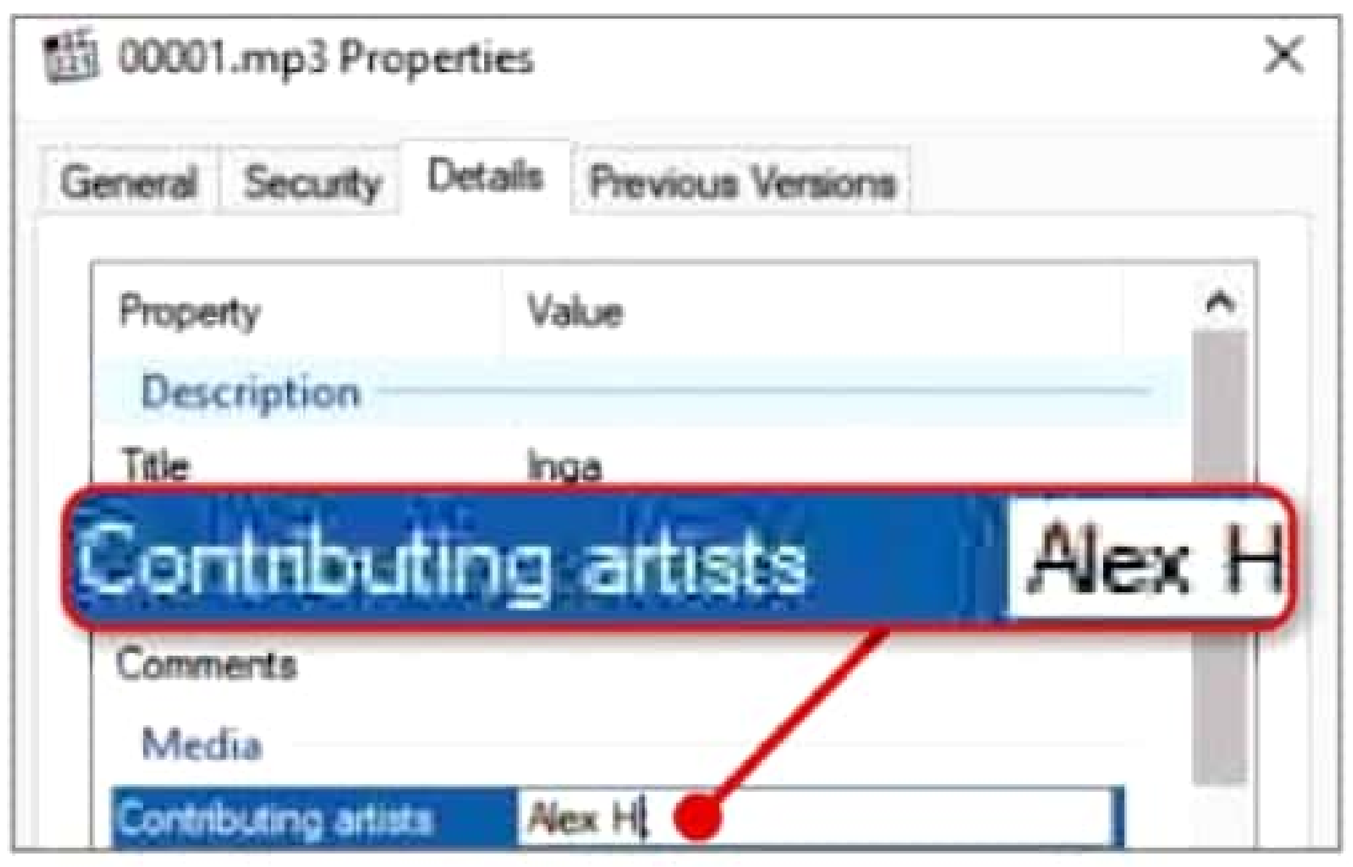
✓ I read Issue 596's How To article on playing music from your PC in your car with interest because ever since getting a new Volvo XC40 last February I've had a persistent problem playing some MP3s from a USB stick.

I like to make compilation albums by the same artist but when I tried to play one of these recently, only four of the 18 tracks were detected by Volvo's infotainment system. I eventually found a solution as follows. Place the USB stick into your PC and open File Explorer to view the contents. Look for the column 'Contributing Artists' and check whether there is an entry for each track. If the column is not there, right-click the title bar and select it.

In my case, only the tracks with the Contributing Artists entry would be visible in my car. To change this, select one or more titles then right-click your selection and click Properties. Click the Details tab, then click to the right of 'Contributing artists' under Media (see screenshot below). This will now become an editable field. Just type the artist's name and click Apply. All tracks will now show the artist name in File Explorer and will now be visible in your car.

I've not had this problem in previous cars, so does anyone know why it happens in my Volvo?

**Paul Davies**



00001.mp3 Properties
General
Security
Details
Previous Versions
Property
Value
Description

Title: Inga

Contributing artists: Alex H

Comments
Media

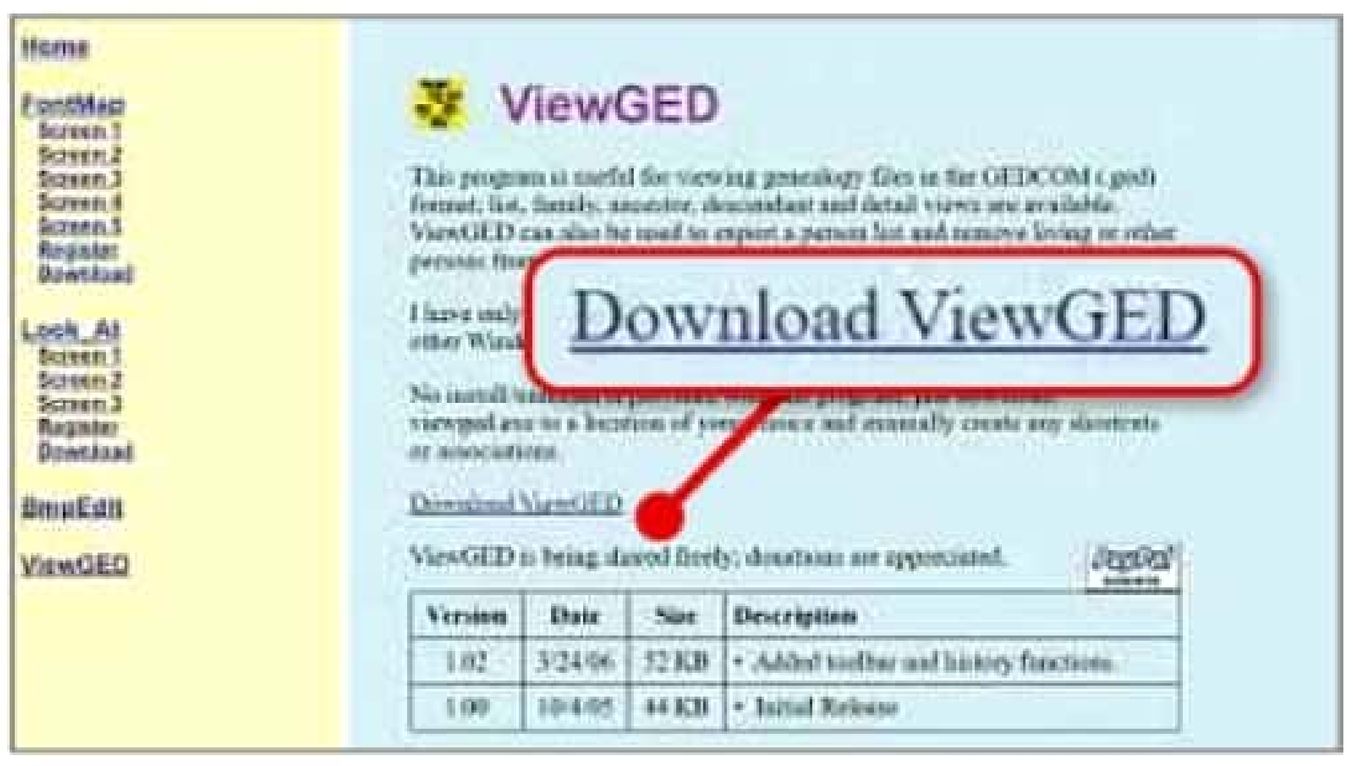
Contributing artists: Alex H

MUSIC

## Play music via iPod in your car

✓ Regarding Issue 596's How To on playing music in your car, I still use my ancient but trusty iPod Nano to play iTunes in my eight-year-old Kia. It has a combined USB and Aux jack, letting me play my 1,200-odd songs.

**Chris Westhead**



Home
FontMap
Screen 1
Screen 2
Screen 3
Screen 4
Screen 5
Register
Download
Look_At
Screen 1
Screen 2
Screen 3
Register
Download
BmpEdit
ViewGED
ViewGED
Download ViewGED
Download ViewGED

| Version | Date | Size | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.02 | 3/24/06 | 52 KB | • Added toolbar and history functions. |
| 1.00 | 10/4/05 | 44 KB | • Initial Release |

GENEALOGY

## Show more generations in your family tree

As a new reader, I enjoy reading your Grow Your Family Tree genealogy section. With regard to John Skippings' question in Issue 596 (page 16) asking how to show more than six generations in his family tree, it may be worth him using the program viewGED.exe (visit www.snipca.com/37167 and click 'Download ViewGED' – see screenshot above).

It reads a standard GEDCOM file and under its View tab it gives you a choice of how many generations you want to show. I downloaded viewGED.exe ages ago (the last version was released in 2006!), but it works fine in Windows 10.

**Michael Clemitson**

# Phone and Tablet Tips

iOS

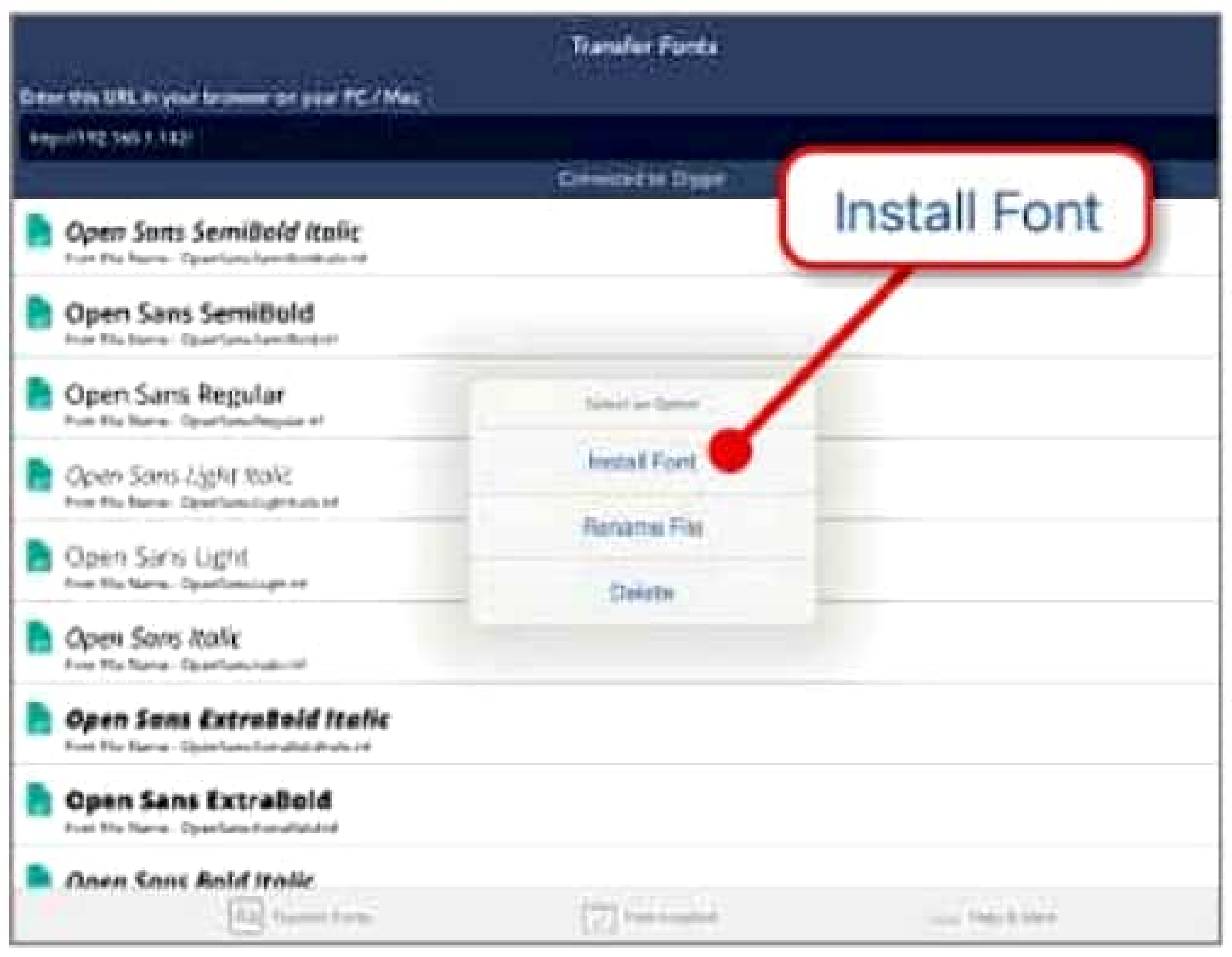
## Install any font on your iPhone or iPad

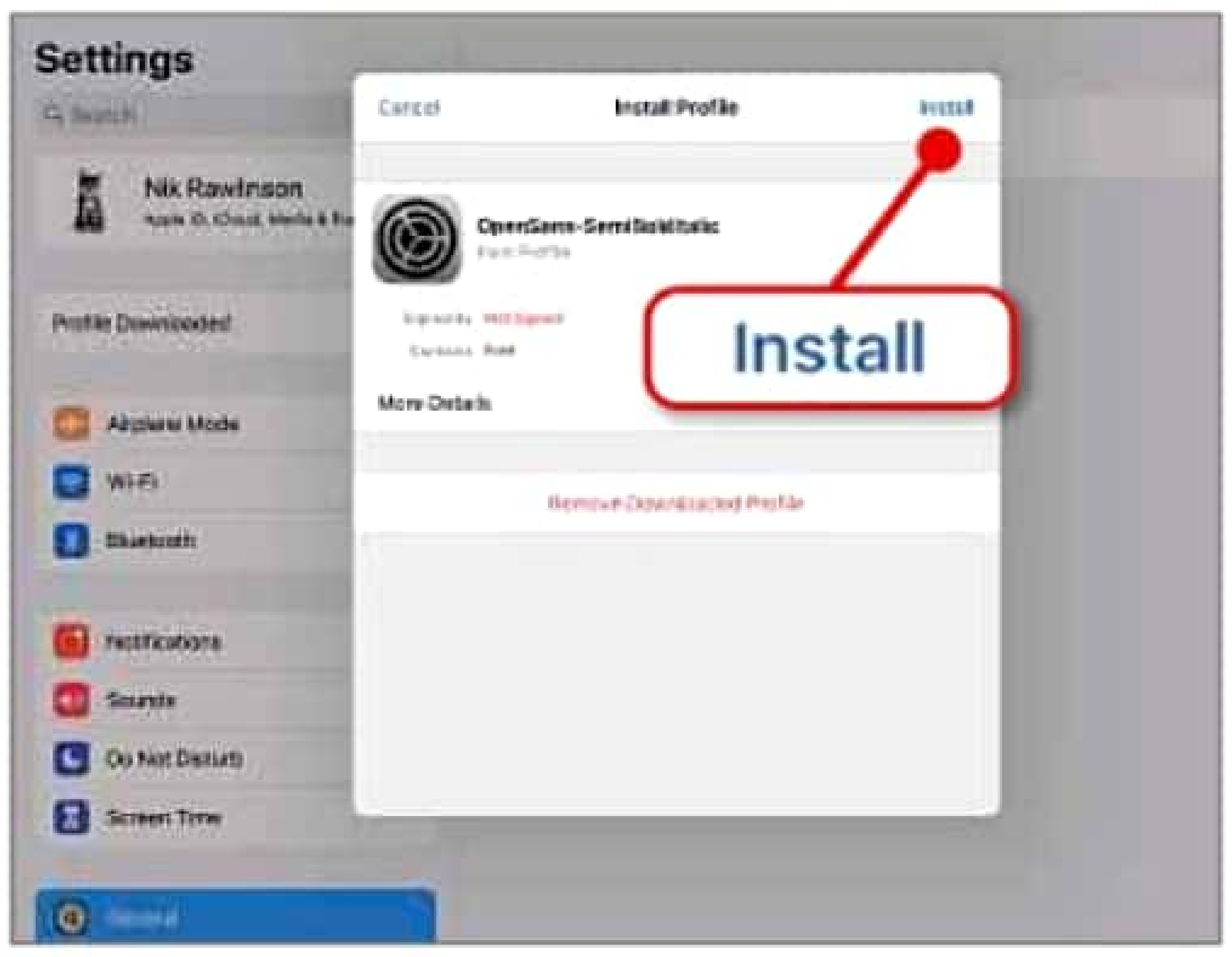
iPads and iPhones come with a range of fonts built in, and apps can also install their own to give you even more. But what if the font you want to use isn't included in any of them? If you're working on a creative project you might find yourself restricted, or only able to do half the job until you can transfer the unfinished document to your PC to be fully formatted with the fonts you need.

This where the All Fonts app (99p from www.snipca.com/37233) comes into its own. It lets you install any TrueType or OpenType font directly from your PC on to your iPad or iPhone. It works by setting up a small web server, which runs on your Apple device, that you access using a browser on your PC.

Launch All Fonts and it will show the iPad or iPhone's numeric address on your network. Type this into your browser bar on your PC and up pops a very simple upload page. Click 'Upload TTF / OTF File', then use the Explorer window that opens to navigate to the font you want to use. If you don't have any fonts handy, you can download an enormous selection from Google Fonts at https://fonts.google.com. Find a font you like the look of, then click 'Download family'. This downloads a zipped version of the file. Unzip it into a folder of its own so it's easy to find, then select all the files and click Open.

This adds them to a list in the web browser, and they'll immediately start transferring to your iPhone or iPad, where you'll see a preview of each. Tap any preview you want to make available to your apps, followed by Install Font in the box that appears (see screenshot below left). Tap 'Install Font' again. This opens your Safari browser, and you'll see a second notification called 'Profile Downloaded'. Tap 'Close' on this and open Settings where you'll see an entry for Profile Downloaded at the top of the list of menu options. Tap this, then tap Install (see screenshot below left), enter your device's passcode, and tap Install again, followed by Done. You need to do this for each font you want to install. To use the fonts in an app on your device, open the app and it will appear in its fonts list.


Transfer Fonts
Install Font
Open Sans SemiBold Italic
Open Sans SemiBold
Open Sans Regular
Open Sans Light Italic
Open Sans Light
Open Sans Italic
Open Sans ExtraBold Italic
Open Sans ExtraBold
Install Font
Rename File
Delete


Settings
Nik Rawlinson
Profile Downloaded
Airplane Mode
Wi-Fi
Bluetooth
Notifications
Sounds
Do Not Disturb
Screen Time
Cancel
Install Profile
Install
More Details
Remove Downloaded Profile
Install

ANDROID

## Keep your phone unlocked when you're at home

Unless you run a B&B or hotel, the likelihood of your phone being picked up by someone you don't trust while it's at home is fairly low. So, unless you need to keep it locked to protect younger eyes, it can be a lot more convenient to leave it unlocked until you next go out. Manually enabling and disabling your lock is probably more hassle than it's worth. This is where Android's Smart Lock feature can come in handy.

To enable it, first make sure you've set a PIN, password or pattern on your phone that it can prompt you to tap when you leave the house. If you haven't already, open Settings and tap Security followed by Screen Lock. Select one of the options, then follow the instructions for entering the required code or defining the pattern you want to use.

Now return to the Security screen and tap Smart Lock. You'll need to enter the password, PIN or pattern you just set up, after which you can tap 'Trusted places'. Your phone will detect where it

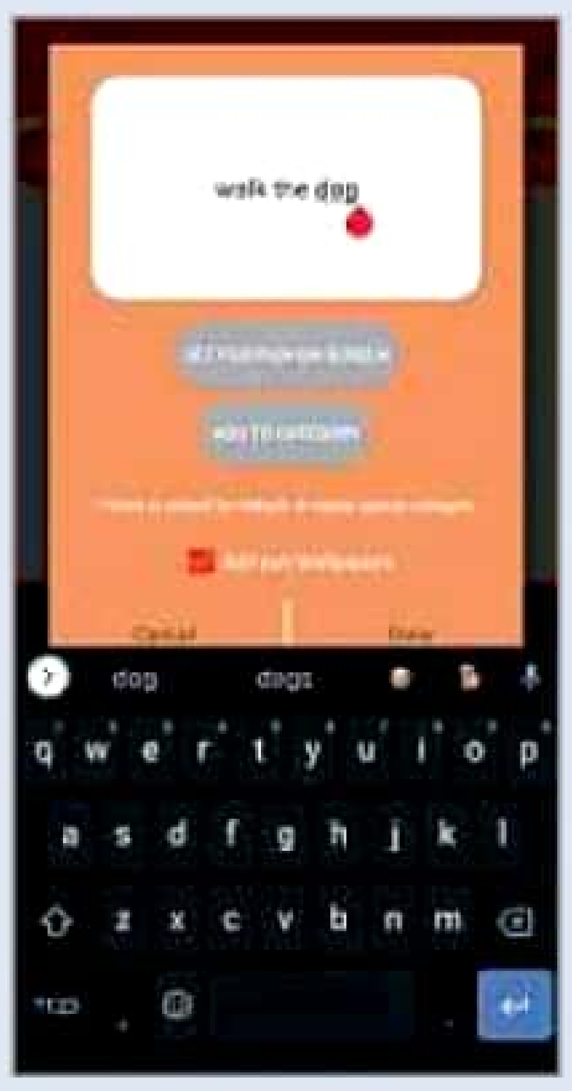
## BEST NEW APPS What you should install this fortnight

### Heynote

**Free**

**Android** www.snipca.com/37235

Never forget important jobs or errands. This app lets you write them on your phone's wallpaper so they always appear behind your app icons until you've completed them. You can set the size and font of each message, and choose the background you want to use as your wallpaper. Now there's no excuse for leaving jobs incomplete.

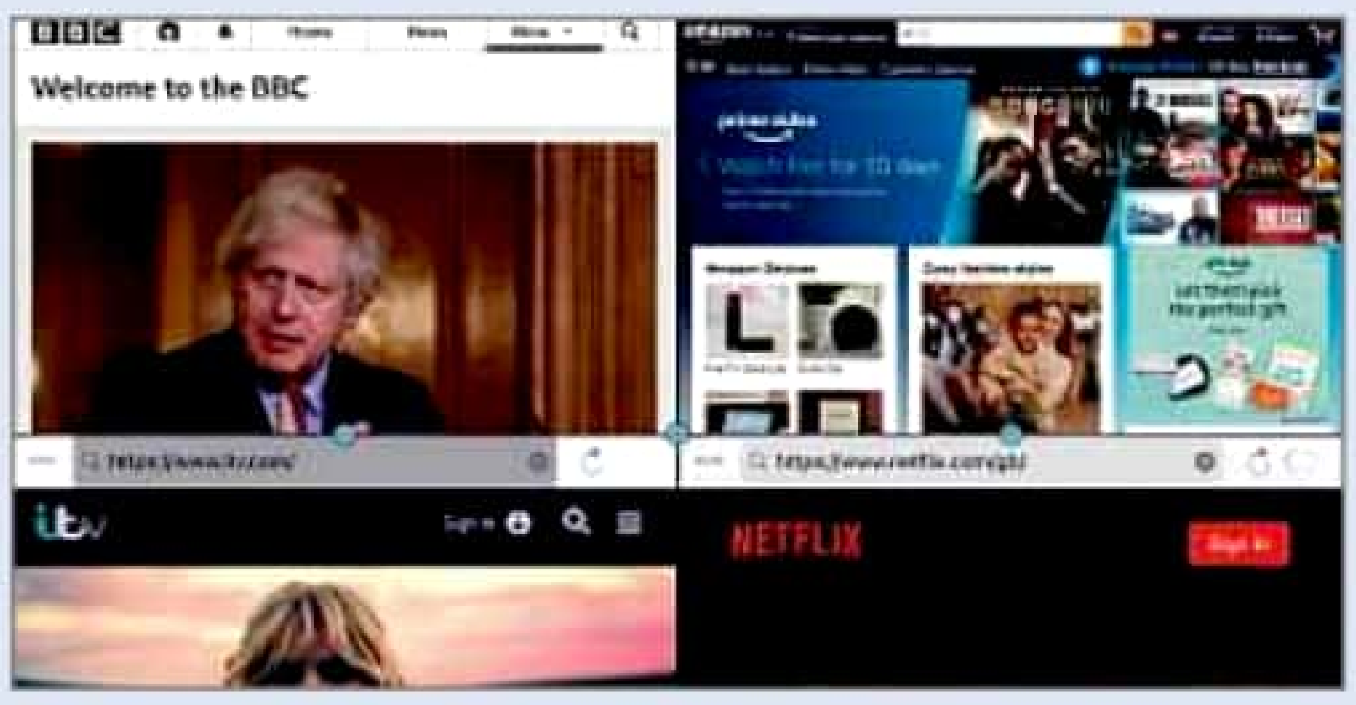

walk the dog

### Dual

**£4.99**

**iOS** www.snipca.com/37234

When you need to keep an eye on several web pages at once, Dual lets you open them side by side. You can set up six different workspaces, each of which can display one, two or four pages simultaneously. The reload button refreshes everything at once, and there's even an ad-blocker.

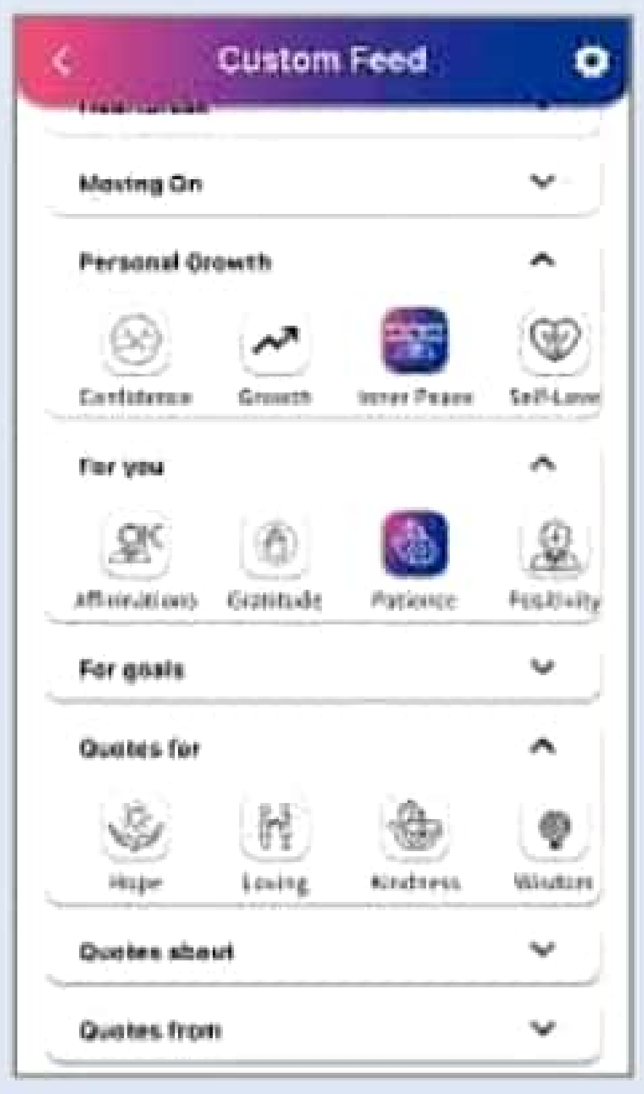

Welcome to the BBC
NETFLIX

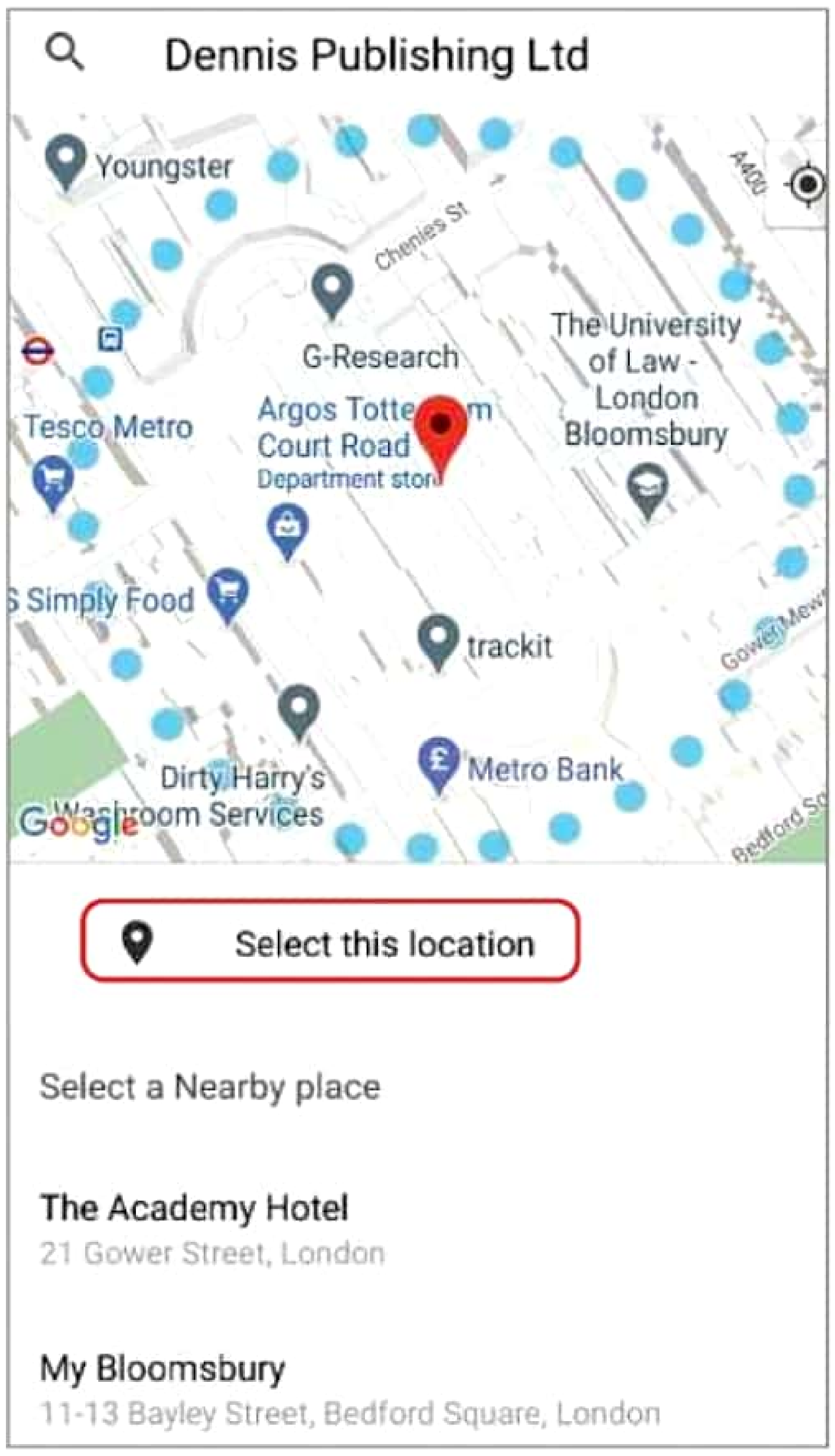
### The Poetics

**Free**

**iOS, Android** www.thepoetics.app

Apple highlighted The Poetics – available for iOS and Android – as one of its apps of the week. Choose a handful of subjects, like motivation and inspiration, and it will build a personalised feed, drawn from the best authors, poets and personalities, and pop them up at intervals to give you motivation during the day.


Custom Feed
Moving On
Personal Growth
For you
For goals
Quotes for
Quotes about
Quotes from


Dennis Publishing Ltd
Youngster
Chenies St
A400
G-Research
The University of Law - London Bloomsbury
Tesco Metro
Argos Tottenham Court Road Department store
Simply Food
trackit
Gower Mews
Dirty Harry's
Metro Bank
Washroom Services
Bedford Sq
Google
Select this location
Select a Nearby place

The Academy Hotel
21 Gower Street, London

My Bloomsbury
11-13 Bayley Street, Bedford Square, London

is. If you want to set that as a trusted position, tap 'Select this location'.

Alternatively, if you want to set it to somewhere else, like another family member's house, tap beside the magnifying glass at the top of the screen and search for it. The map will re-centre on your search result and a list of known businesses and places of interest close by will be shown below it. Either tap 'Select this location' (see screenshot above) if it's got it right on the first attempt, or tap one of the locations beneath it.

Google will ask you to confirm the location. If you're happy to proceed, tap OK.

iOS

## Tap the back of your iPhone to perform actions

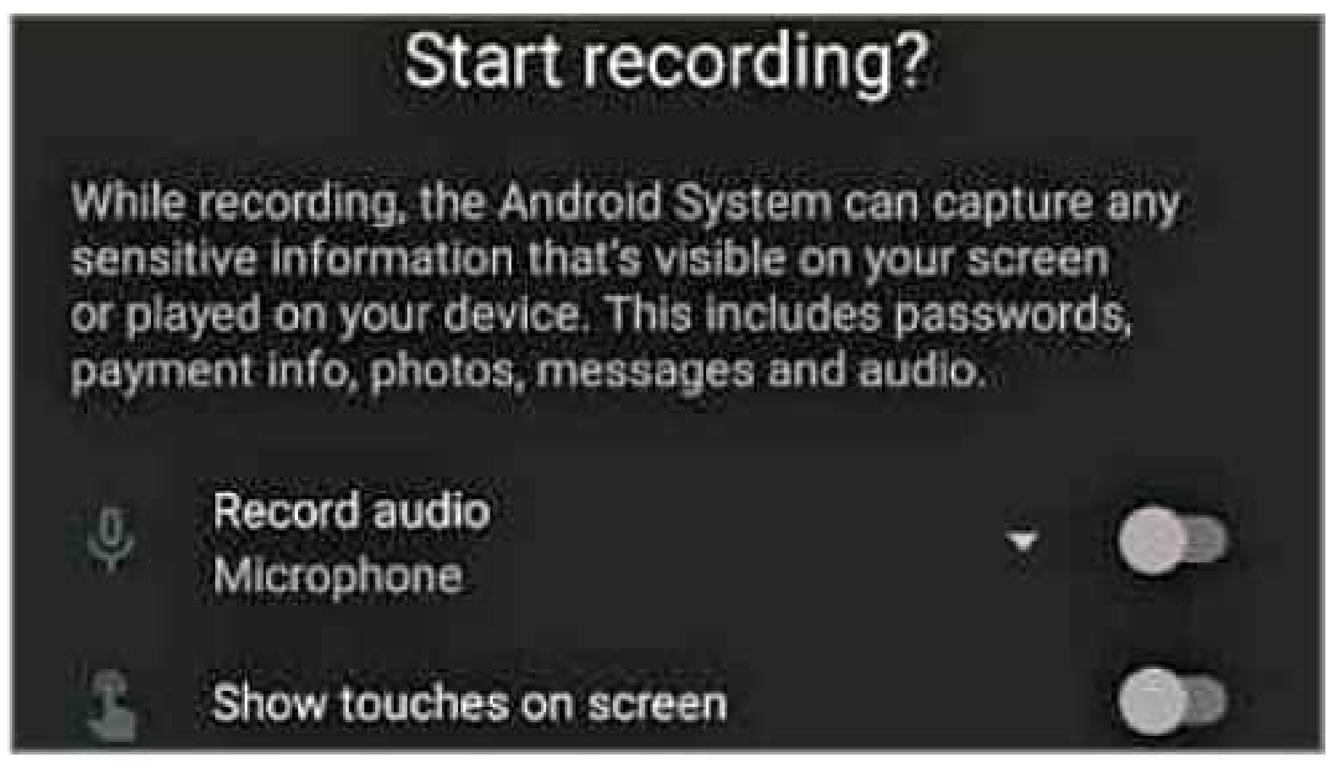
If you're running iOS 14 on an iPhone 8 or later, you can define actions that you want your iPhone to carry out when you tap on the back of your device. To set this up, open Settings and tap Accessibility followed by Touch. Now tap Back Tap. You can set up an action in response to either a double-tap or a triple-tap by selecting the appropriate option in the menu, then choosing which action you want this to carry out. There's a wide selection to choose from, like locking the phone, muting it, taking a screenshot or opening Siri, among others.

ANDROID

## Use Android 11's built-in screen recorder

Android 11, released last September, is starting to become more popular as existing phones receive the update and new devices go on sale with it pre-installed. If you're one of the lucky ones already running it, or you're planning on upgrading, be sure to check out the built-in screen-recording tool.

Swipe down from the top of the screen to open the shortcuts menu, then swipe left and tap 'Screen record'. Tap the sliders beside 'Record audio' and 'Show touches on screen' (see screenshot above right) if you want to narrate what you're doing and also mark out each tap, then tap Start. The second of these options is particularly useful, as it lets you demonstrate what you're doing if you're remotely helping someone to learn how to perform a task on their own phone.



Start recording?

While recording, the Android System can capture any sensitive information that's visible on your screen or played on your device. This includes passwords, payment info, photos, messages and audio.

Record audio
Microphone

Show touches on screen

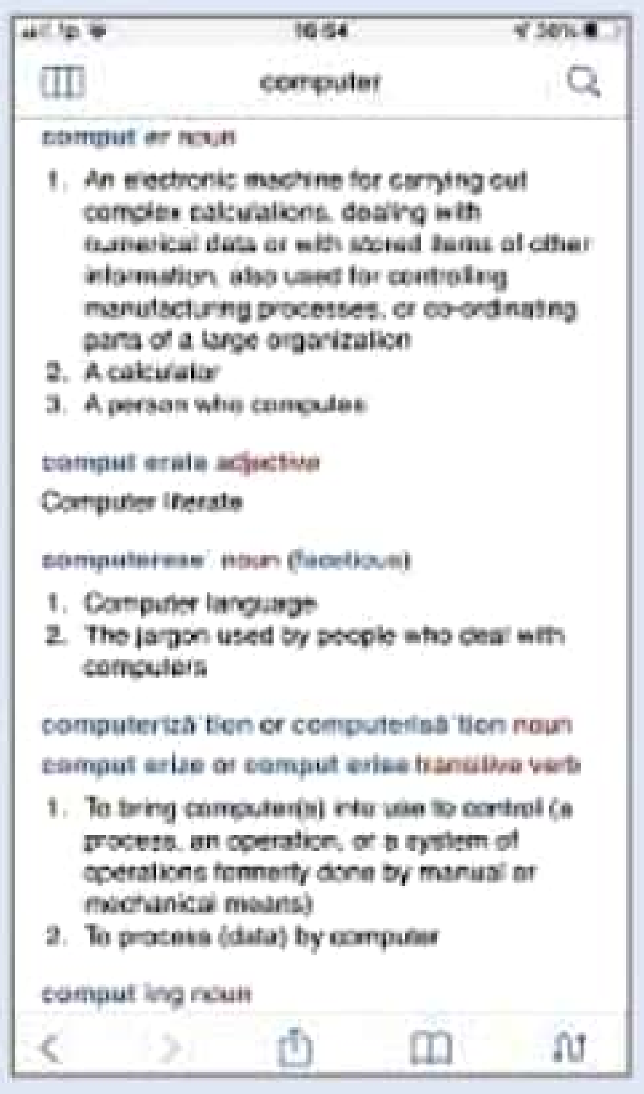
## BEST APPS FOR... Dictionaries

### Chambers Dictionary

**Android £7.99** www.snipca.com/37239
**iOS £9.99** www.snipca.com/37238

Beloved of crossword setters (not to mention crossword solvers), Chambers includes 300,000 words and phrases. As well as using the standard search tool, you can enter the parts of a word you know, and replace missing letters with question marks to deliver matching results, which is handy for completing puzzles.

**Best for** Crossword addicts



Look up
Search
co?put?r

### Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus

**Android Free*** www.snipca.com/37243
**iOS £6.99** www.snipca.com/37242

This is a mammoth dictionary and thesaurus with hundreds of thousands of definitions, cultural notes, biographical entries, synonyms and more. The iOS app requires a payment and works offline as the definitions are stored locally. The Android version draws its definitions from the web, but you can upgrade to offline functionality with an in-app purchase.

**Best for** Writers and researchers

WORD OF THE DAY
encourage

Collins Dictionary
Offline Mode
WORD OF THE DAY
top whack
27 Jan 2021
RECENT
encourage (Dictionary), well-wri...
Offline Dictionary
GO
Word Look up
Ad Free Dictionary

### Concise Oxford Thesaurus

**iOS £9.99** www.snipca.com/37245
**Android Free*** www.snipca.com/37244

When you can't find the perfect word, a thesaurus is often the answer. With 300,000 synonyms, antonyms and usage notes, this app could be just what you're after, whether you're a creative writer, or trying to put together a more persuasive proposal or letter of complaint.

**Best for** Creative writers

pledge
Remove Ads
GO

Oxford Dictionary
tram
Offline Mode
SUGGESTIONS
trammel
tramp
trample

*Contains in-app purchases

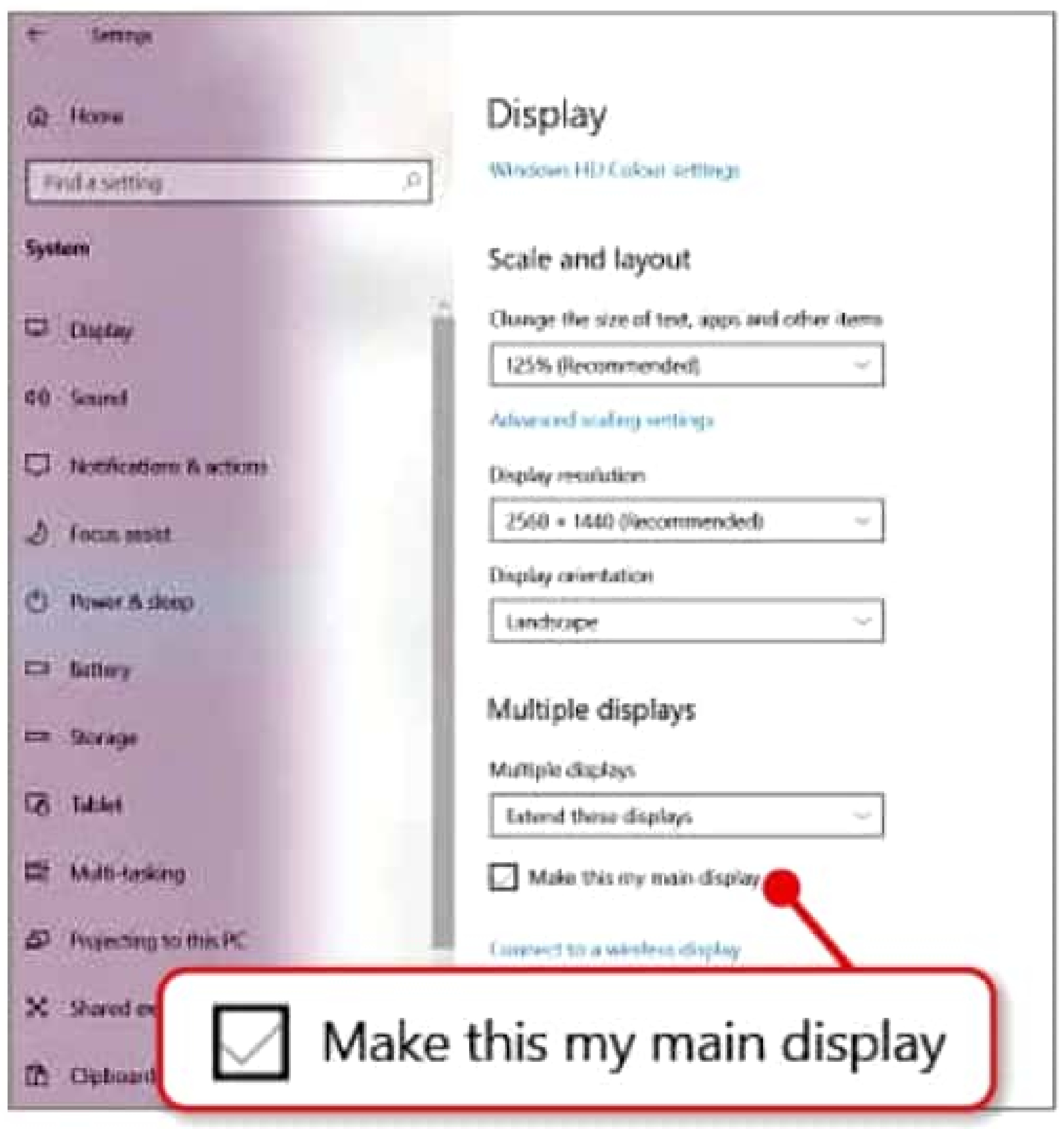
# Make Windows Better

## Expert tips for every version

WINDOWS 7, 8.1 & 10

### Set your primary display

When you've got more than one monitor attached to your PC, one of them will be designated as the primary display – in other words, the one that shows taskbar icons for your programs and the system tray. If you want to set a different monitor as your primary display, right-click an empty part of your desktop and select 'Display settings' (in Windows 7, select 'Screen resolution'). At the top of the window that opens, you'll see all the monitors attached to your PC. Click the one that you want to use as your primary display, then scroll down and tick the 'Make this my main display' box (see screenshot below). Your taskbar and system tray icons will now move to your chosen monitor.


Settings
Home
Find a setting
System
Display
Sound
Notifications & actions
Focus assist
Power & sleep
Battery
Storage
Tablet
Multi-tasking
Projecting to this PC
Shared ex
Clipboard
Windows HD Colour settings
Advanced scaling settings
Connect to a wireless display

Display

Scale and layout

Change the size of text, apps and other items: 125% (Recommended)

Display resolution: 2560 × 1440 (Recommended)

Display orientation: Landscape

Multiple displays

Multiple displays: Extend these displays

☐ Make this my main display

☐ Make this my main display

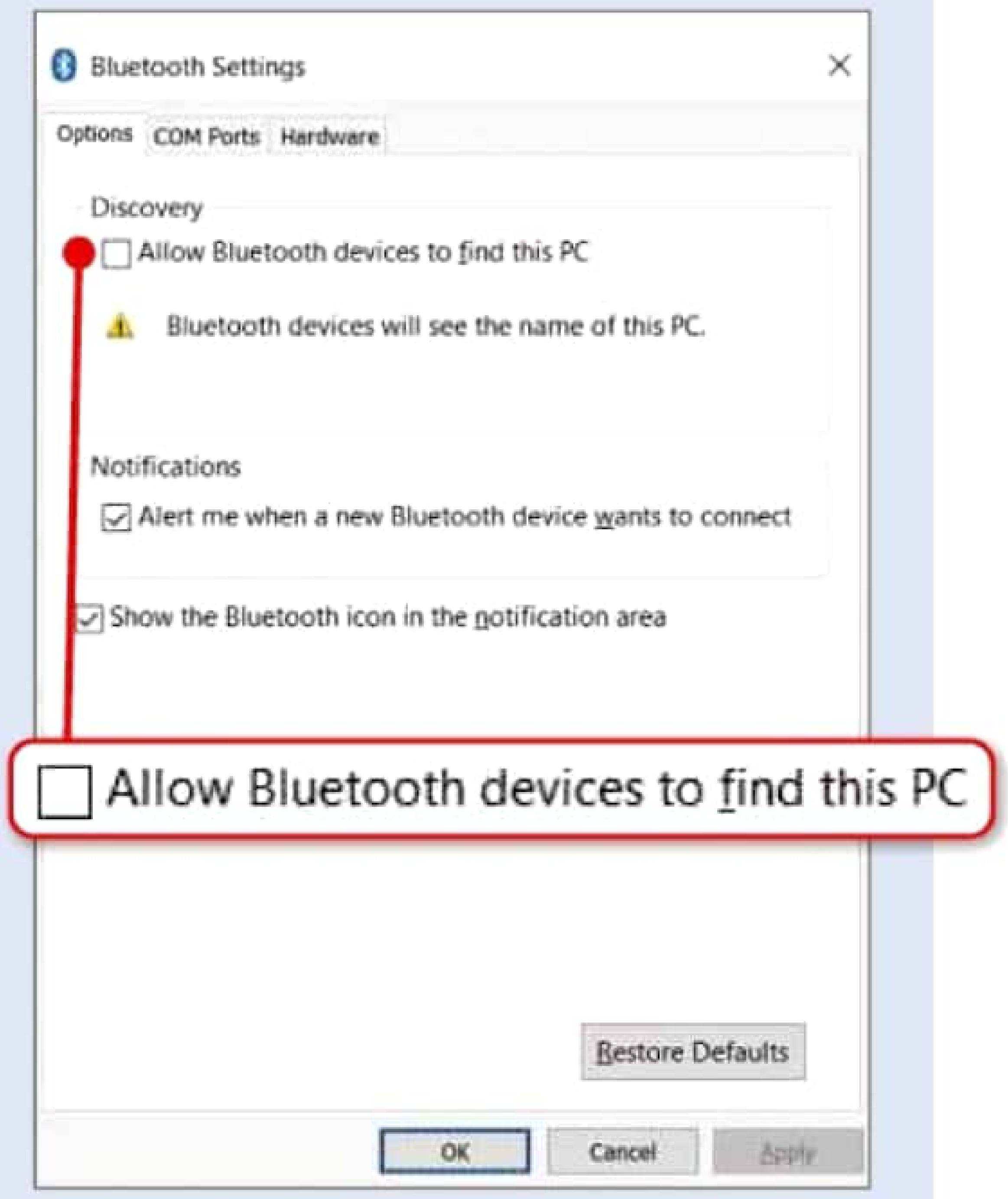
WINDOWS 7, 8.1 & 10

## Stop Bluetooth revealing PC's name

As long as your PC has Bluetooth (either built in or via something like TP-Link's £7.99 adapter – www.snipca.com/37257), you can connect all manner of devices to it, including phones, headsets, keyboards and mice. To make it easier to connect new devices, Windows 'advertises' your PC's Bluetooth connection. This means that you'll see your PC's name if you search for nearby devices using your phone, for example. Similarly, when you're in a public place, other people may see your PC when searching for Bluetooth devices. Depending on how you've named your PC, this could reveal personal information. If you're not sure what name your PC has, click Start, type about your PC, press Enter, then look under 'Device name'.

One option is to rename your PC to something more generic (click 'Rename this PC' in the 'About your PC' window), but you may prefer to stop your PC advertising itself to nearby Bluetooth devices. To do this, open Settings (press the Windows key+I), Devices, Bluetooth, then click 'More Bluetooth options' (this will be located either at the bottom of the window or on the right). Select the Options tab, then untick the 'Allow Bluetooth devices to find this PC' box (see screenshot above) and click OK. In Windows 7, the same option is available by opening Control Panel, then searching for Bluetooth Settings.

Bear in mind that you may need to temporarily re-enable this setting if you want to connect a new Bluetooth device to your PC.


Bluetooth Settings
Options
COM Ports
Hardware
Restore Defaults
OK
Cancel
Apply

Discovery

☐ Allow Bluetooth devices to find this PC

⚠ Bluetooth devices will see the name of this PC.

Notifications

☑ Alert me when a new Bluetooth device wants to connect

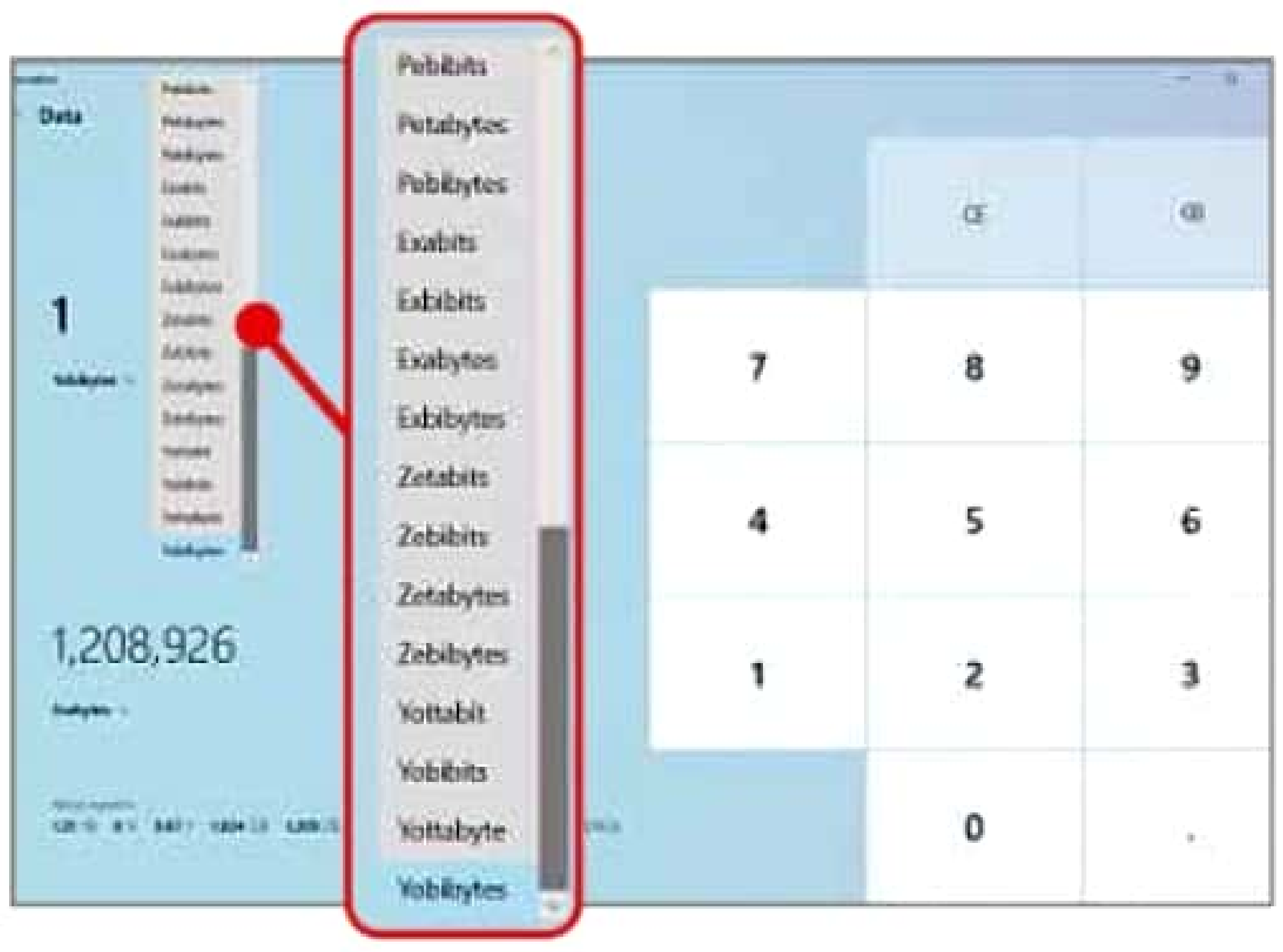
☑ Show the Bluetooth icon in the notification area

☐ Allow Bluetooth devices to find this PC

WINDOWS 10

### Convert data in Calc

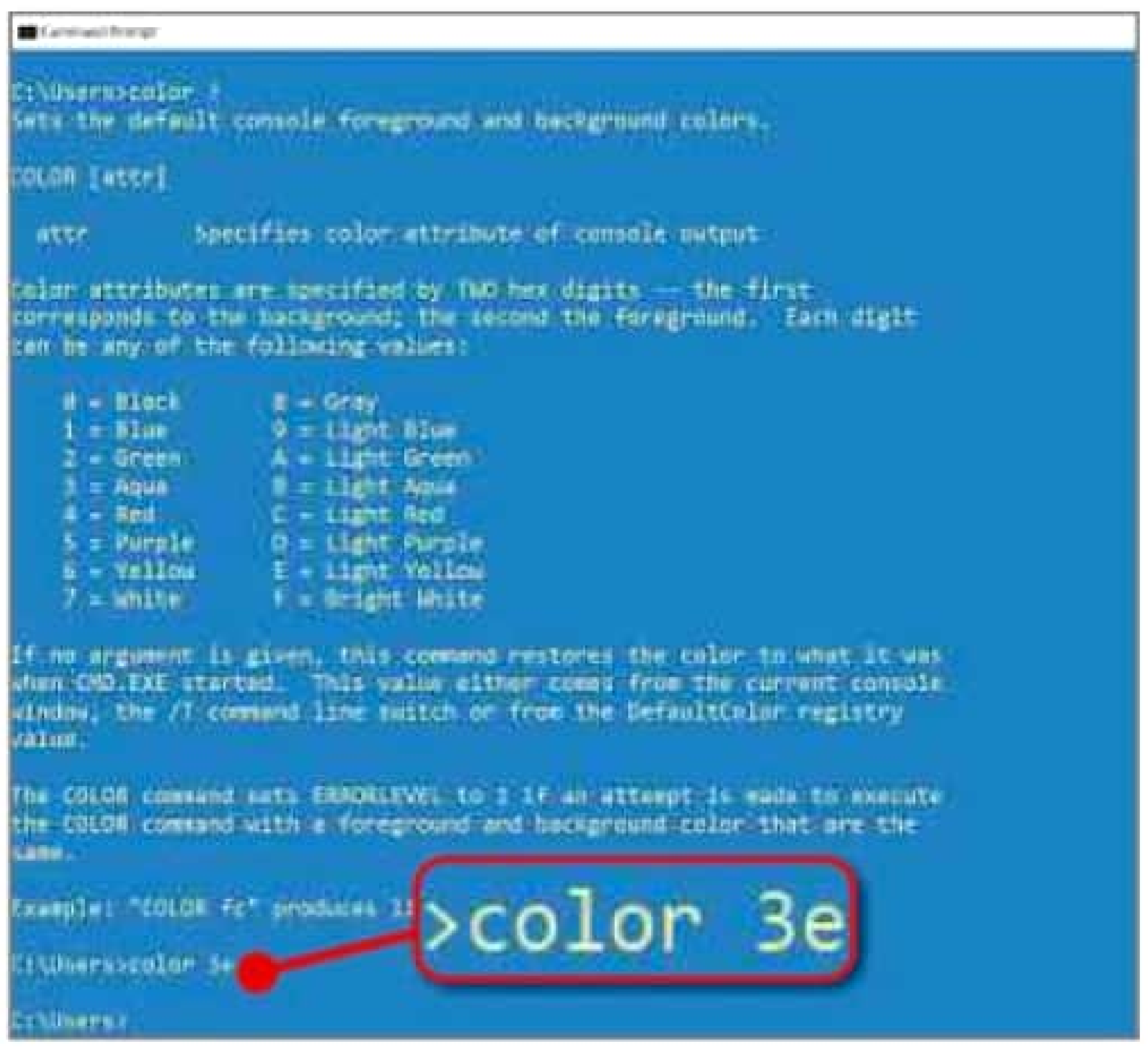
Do you know your megabytes from your megabits? How about exabytes from yobibytes? The Calculator tool that's built into Windows 10 lets you quickly convert all manner of data units. Open Calculator by clicking the Start button, typing calculator, then pressing Enter. Next, click the menu button (three horizontal lines, top-left), scroll down to the Converter section and select Data. Click the data unit located in the top-left corner of the window, then choose the unit you want to convert from (see screenshot above right). Next, click the unit just below this to select what you want to convert it to. All that remains is to enter the amount you want to convert, either by clicking the numbers in the calculator or using your keyboard's number keys. There's no equals button – the figures update as you type. In case you were wondering, there are just over 1.2 million exabytes in a yobibyte.


Data
1
Yobibytes
1,208,926
Exabytes
Pebibits
Petabytes
Pebibytes
Exabits
Exbibits
Exabytes
Exbibytes
Zetabits
Zebibits
Zetabytes
Zebibytes
Yottabit
Yobibits
Yottabyte
Yobibytes
CE
⌫
7
8
9
4
5
6
1
2
3
0
.

WINDOWS 7, 8.1 & 10

### Change Command Prompt colours

You can change the colours Command Prompt uses by right-clicking the title bar, selecting Properties, then adjusting the settings in the Colours tab. However, there's a much quicker way: type color (note the US spelling), followed by two characters. The first character sets the background colour, the second is for the text colour. To see which colour each character relates to, type color ?. In the screenshot above, we've gone for color 3e, which gives us pale green text on a light blue background.


Command Prompt

```
C:\Users>color ?
Sets the default console foreground and background colors.

COLOR [attr]

  attr        Specifies color attribute of console output

Color attributes are specified by TWO hex digits -- the first
corresponds to the background; the second the foreground.  Each digit
can be any of the following values:

    0 = Black       8 = Gray
    1 = Blue        9 = Light Blue
    2 = Green       A = Light Green
    3 = Aqua        B = Light Aqua
    4 = Red         C = Light Red
    5 = Purple      D = Light Purple
    6 = Yellow      E = Light Yellow
    7 = White       F = Bright White

If no argument is given, this command restores the color to what it was
when CMD.EXE started.  This value either comes from the current console
window, the /T command line switch or from the DefaultColor registry
value.

The COLOR command sets ERRORLEVEL to 1 if an attempt is made to execute
the COLOR command with a foreground and background color that are the
same.

Example: "COLOR fc" produces li

C:\Users>color 3e

C:\Users>
```

>color 3e

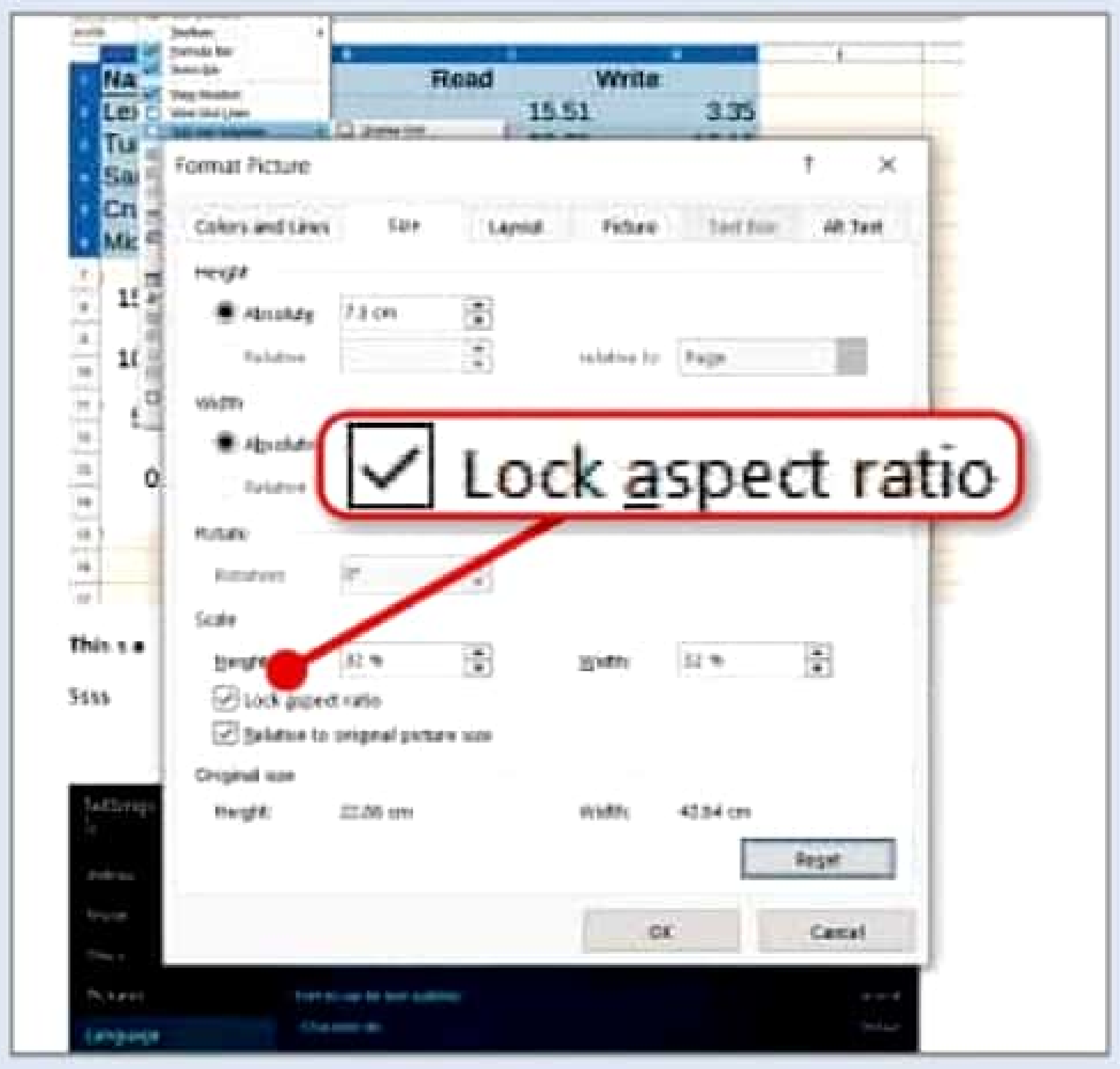
**MICROSOFT WORD**

# Resize multiple images faster

Microsoft Word includes a hidden shortcut that lets you repeat your previous action. To try it, carry out an edit (such as underlining or changing the size of text), then highlight another section of your document and press F4. Word will now repeat your last action on the selected text.

This shortcut is particularly helpful when resizing images in a document so that they're all the same height or width. Right-click the first image in your document, then select 'Format Picture...'. In the window that appears, select the Size tab, then make sure the 'Lock aspect ratio' box is ticked (see screenshot) – this ensures your images aren't squashed or stretched as a result of being resized. Enter the size you want all your images to be in the Height and Width boxes above that.

Click OK to apply the edit and return to your document. Now select the next image and press F4. Word will repeat your last action, resizing the image to match the previous one. You can now carry on working through your document, selecting each image in turn and pressing F4 to resize it.



Although LibreOffice Writer has a similar shortcut (press Ctrl+Shift+Y), it only works with text, so you can't use it to resize images in the same way.

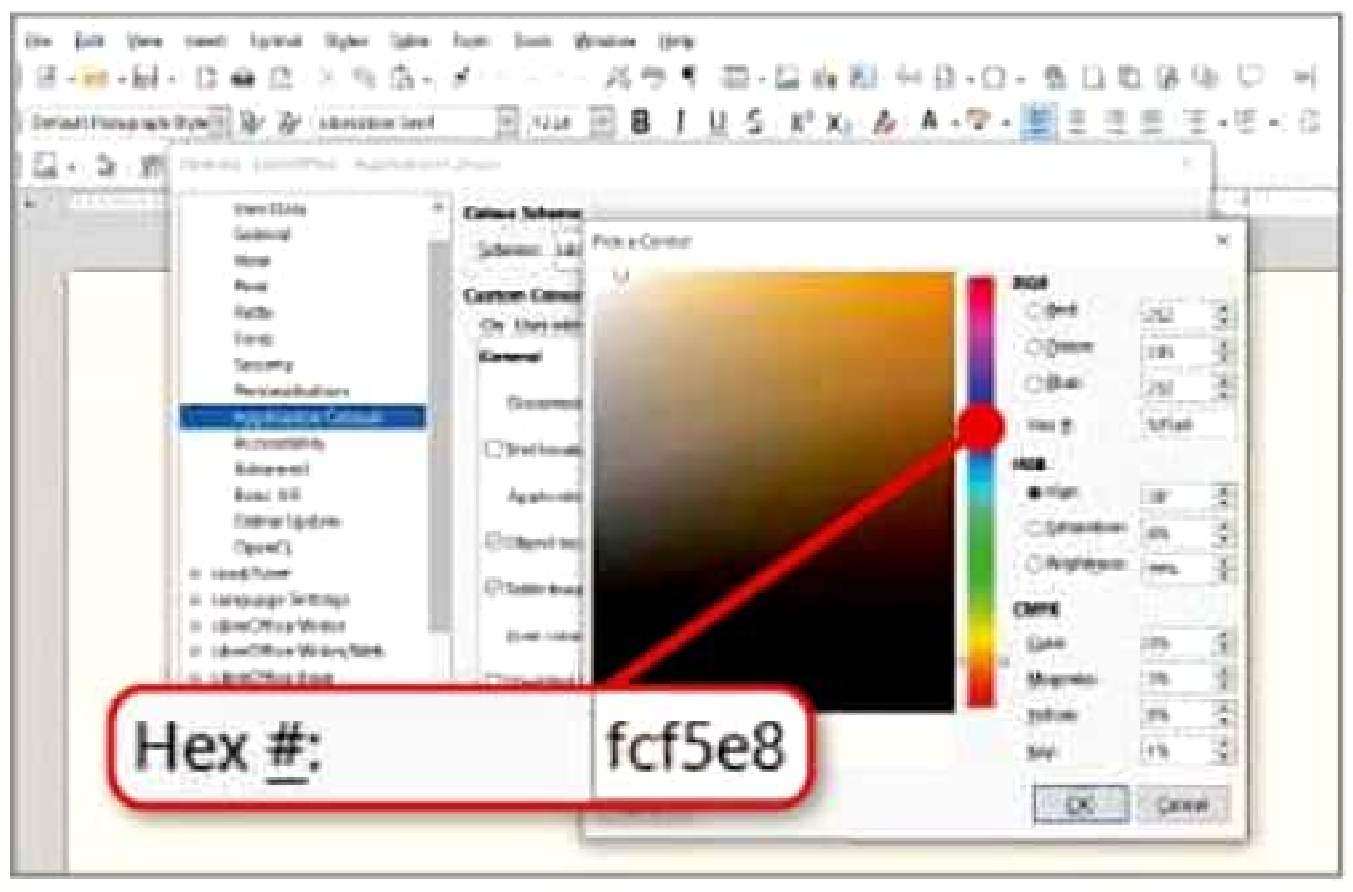
**MICROSOFT WORD & LIBREOFFICE WRITER**

## Make documents easier to read

Microsoft Word includes a Read Mode tool that temporarily removes all toolbars and buttons, letting you focus on your document. To use it, open your document, then click the View tab in the toolbar followed by Read Mode (far left of the toolbar). If you find the white background is a strain on your eyes, try changing it by clicking the View menu, Page Color, then Sepia. Your document will now have a more relaxing, parchment-style background.

LibreOffice Writer doesn't have the same Read Mode tool, but you can achieve a similar effect. First, change the background colour of your document by opening the Tools menu then selecting Options. In the left-hand sidebar, open the LibreOffice section, then select Application Colours. Click the dropdown box next to 'Document background', then select 'Custom Colour...'. You can choose any colour here, but to apply the same sepia effect as in Word, select the 'Hex #' box and enter fcf5e8 (see screenshot below left). Click OK twice to return to your document.

To hide all your toolbars, turn on Writer's Full Screen mode by pressing Ctrl+Shift+J. When you've finished working, use the same keyboard shortcut to revert to the normal view. To restore the original background colour, return to the Application Colours section in the Options window, click 'Document background', then select Automatic.



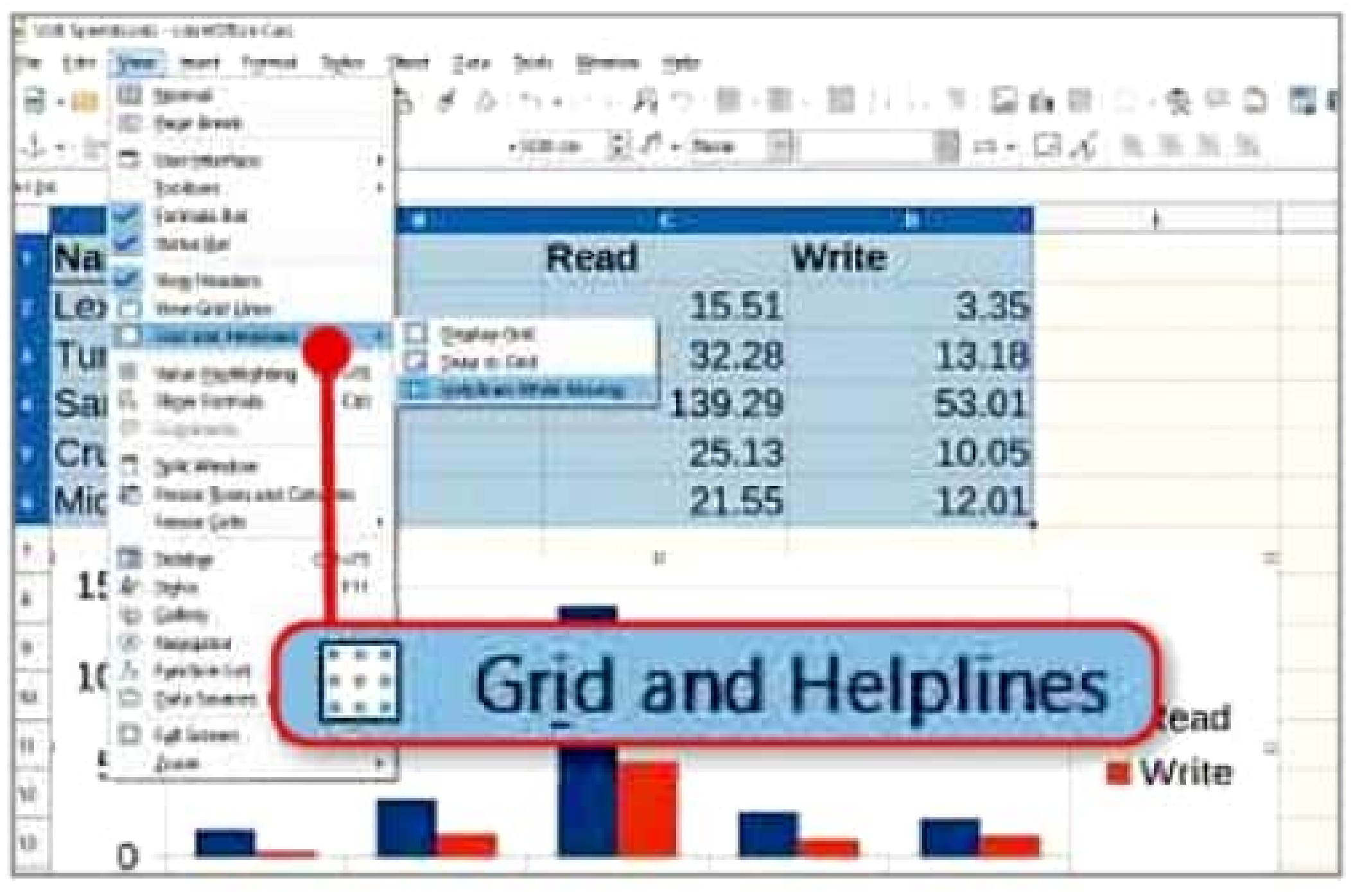
**LIBREOFFICE CALC & WRITER**

## Align objects more effectively

When you have multiple pictures in a document or charts in a spreadsheet, making sure they're perfectly aligned isn't easy – unless you're using LibreOffice. Click the View menu, 'Grid and Helplines' (see screenshot below), then select Helplines While Moving. When you next drag an object (such as an image, chart or table), horizontal and vertical dotted lines will appear from the edges of the object, letting you place it in line with other items on the page.

To make things easier, return to the 'Grid and Helplines' menu option and select 'Snap to Grid'. When you drag an object, it will now snap to equidistant grid points on the page, making it much easier to align it with others. You can show the grid points by selecting Display Grid from the Helplines While Moving menu.

To turn any of these features off, return to the 'Grid and Helplines' menu, then select the appropriate feature.

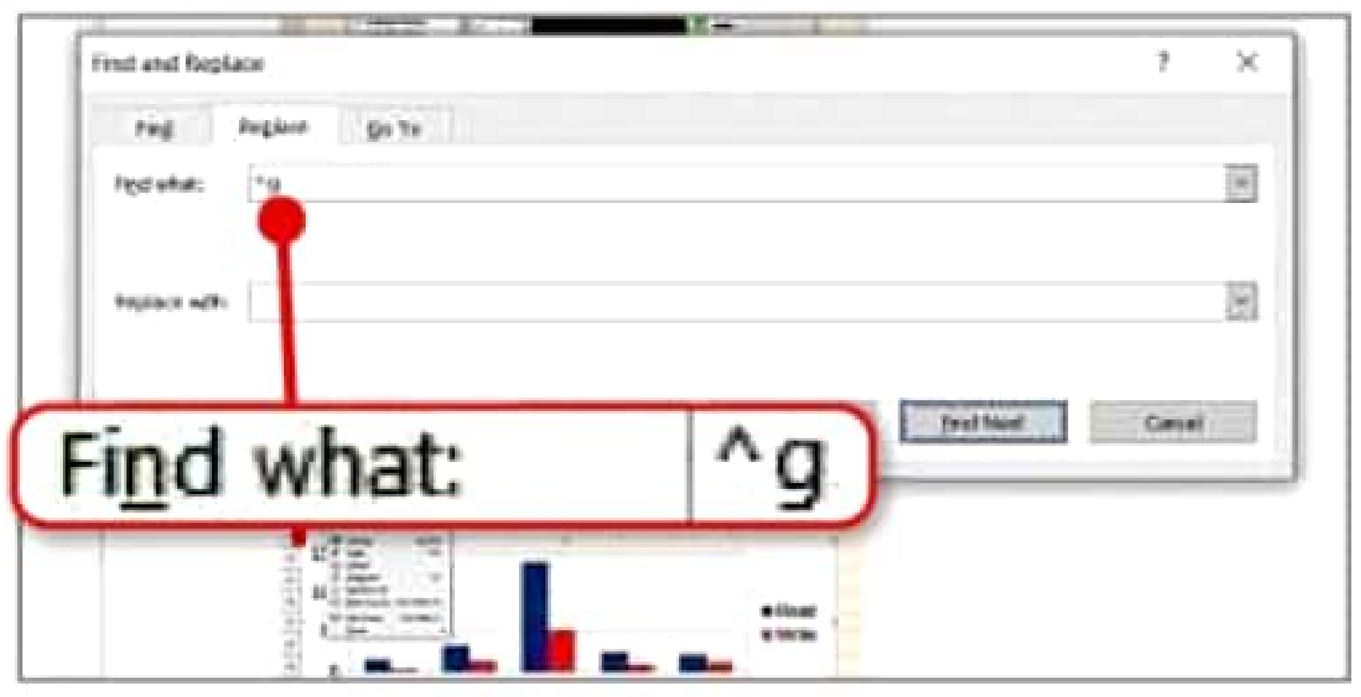


**MICROSOFT WORD**

## Remove all images in a document

A couple of images in a document can help break up large chunks of text, but when you have a document crammed with images it can be difficult to read, and take longer to load and navigate. Word has a clever shortcut that lets you quickly remove all images in a document.

Open your document, then press Ctrl+H to open the 'Find and Replace' box. In the 'Find what' box, type ^g (see screenshot below, press Shift+6 to enter the hat symbol before the 'g') – this command tells Word to look for all images in the document. To remove all images, leave the 'Replace with' box empty, then click Replace All. Alternatively, repeatedly click Replace to check each image before removing.


Find what: ^g

# In The Club

Run a club or society? Here's how your tech can make it easier

## Share club info in a Google Drive folder

From planning documents for an upcoming event to enrolment information for prospective members, there's a plenty a club will need to share. Emailing these details on an ad-hoc basis not only takes time, but also risks people working off old document versions. With a free Google account, you can streamline the process by creating shared folders that only people you specify can access.

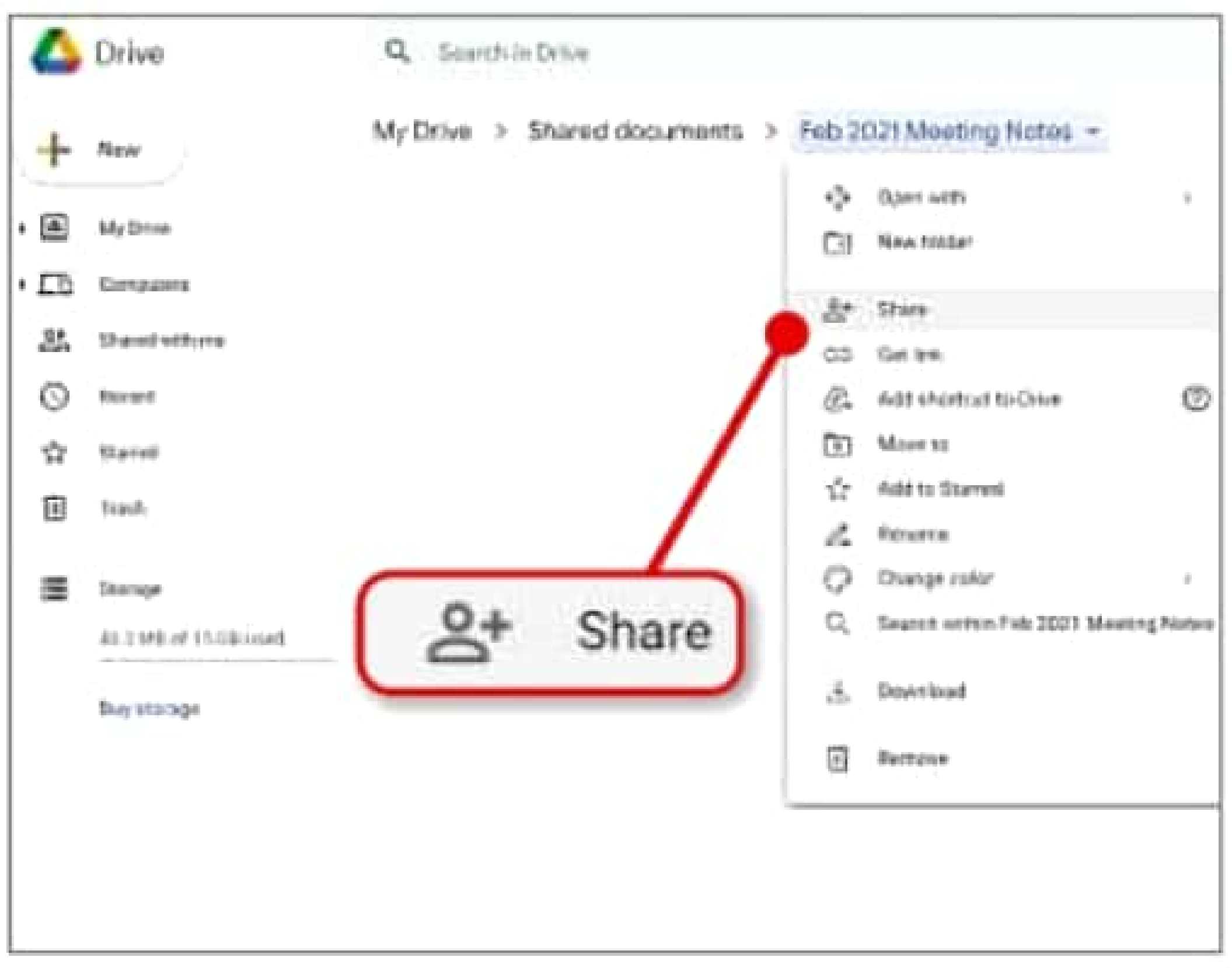
Your members don't need a Google account to access your shared folders, but as the administrator you'll need one to set them up. If you don't already have a Google account, create one for free at www.snipca.com/37225. Next, go to https://drive.google.com and, if prompted, sign into your Google account.

To create a shared folder, click New (top left), followed by Folder. We're calling ours 'Shared documents'. Open the folder you've just created, then add the documents you want to share to it. You can do this by right-clicking and selecting 'Upload files' (to add selected files) or 'Upload folder' (to add an entire folder), but it's often easier to simply drag and drop them directly into it.

### Choose who to share your folder with

To share your new Google Drive folder, right-click it (you'll find it listed just below the search box at the top) and click Share (see screenshot below).

If you want to share it with specific people, type (or paste) their email addresses (separated by commas) in the 'Add people or groups' box. If you've set up a Google Group for your club, you can share the folder with the entire group by entering the group's email address here (we'll look at Google Groups in more detail in Issue 600).


Drive
Search in Drive
New
My Drive
Computers
Shared with me
Recent
Starred
Trash
Storage
Buy storage
My Drive > Shared documents > Feb 2021 Meeting Notes
Open with
New folder
Share
Get link
Add shortcut to Drive
Move to
Add to Starred
Rename
Change color
Search within Feb 2021 Meeting Notes
Download
Remove
Share

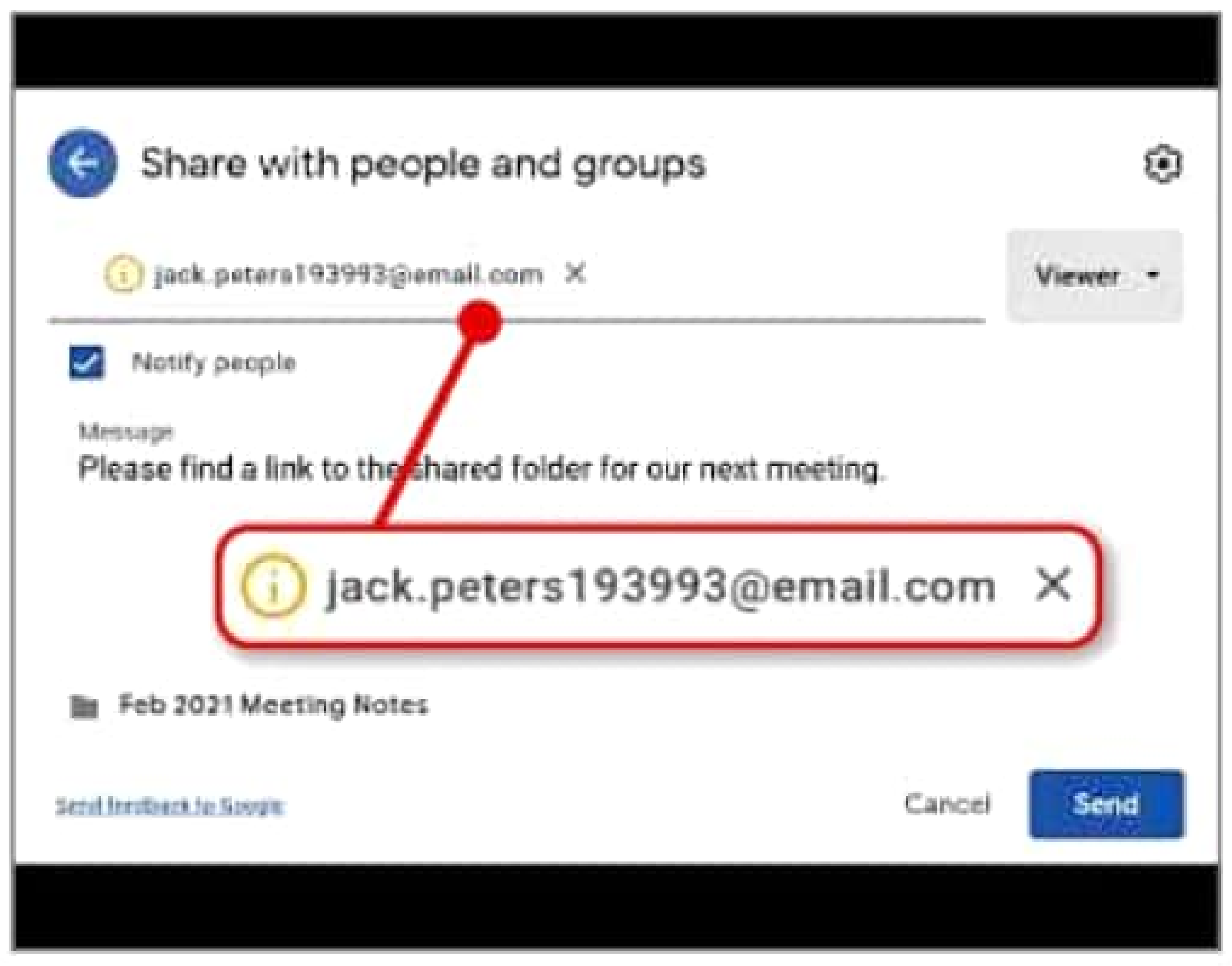
Right-click a folder and select Share to specify who can access it

In the box to the right of the email addresses, select the permission level you want to apply to your members. In most cases, it's a good idea to select Viewer here, which lets people see all documents, but not change them. If you choose Comments, people won't be able to edit documents, but they can add notes to them. Selecting 'Editor' gives people full access, letting them edit, create, move and delete documents.

Bear in mind that when you share a folder, all its sub-folders (both existing and new) inherit the same sharing and permission settings as the parent folder. Enter a suitable message in the box below and click Send. Your message, along with a link for accessing the folder, will then be emailed to the group.

If you included people with non-Gmail addresses, you'll see an orange exclamation mark next to their name (see screenshot below). These contacts will be sent a link that lets them access the folder without having to log in.

The downside to this is these contacts could forward this link to other people, who will then gain access. In contrast, when you share folders with people who have Gmail addresses, they can only access them by signing in with their Google account.

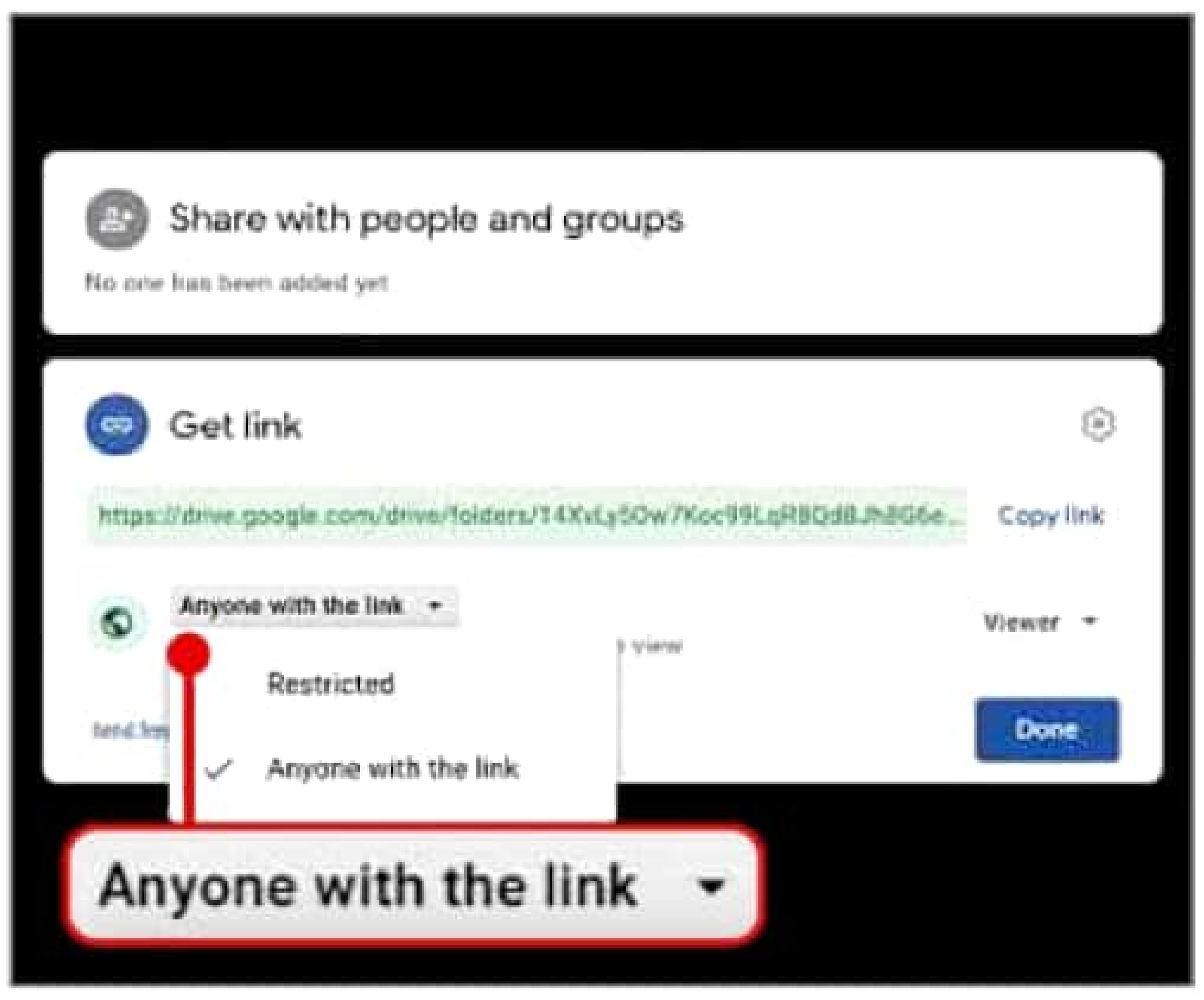

Share with people and groups
Viewer
Notify people
Message
Feb 2021 Meeting Notes
Send feedback to Google
Cancel
Send

jack.peters193993@email.com

☑ Notify people

Please find a link to the shared folder for our next meeting.

This symbol means the recipient won't need to log into Google to access your folder


Share with people and groups
No one has been added yet
Get link
Copy link
Anyone with the link
Viewer
Restricted
Anyone with the link
Done
Anyone with the link

You can create a public link to share your folder with anyone

You can avoid having to enter individual email addresses and instead create a single public sharing link, which you can then send in a group email to your members. Be aware that – as when you add non-Gmail addresses – doing this means that people outside your club may gain access to your folder if the link is forwarded on. If you're happy to do this, click the 'Get link' section, select 'Anyone with the link' in the box (see screenshot above), then 'Copy link'. You can now paste the link into an email and send it to your members.

At any point, you can add or remove people and their access permissions by returning to the Share window.

### See who has made edits

If you've allowed people to make edits to your documents, you can keep track of who's done what by opening the File menu, selecting 'Version history', then 'See version history'. The sidebar on the right shows all recent versions – select one and all changes made to it will be highlighted, along with the name of the person who made them.

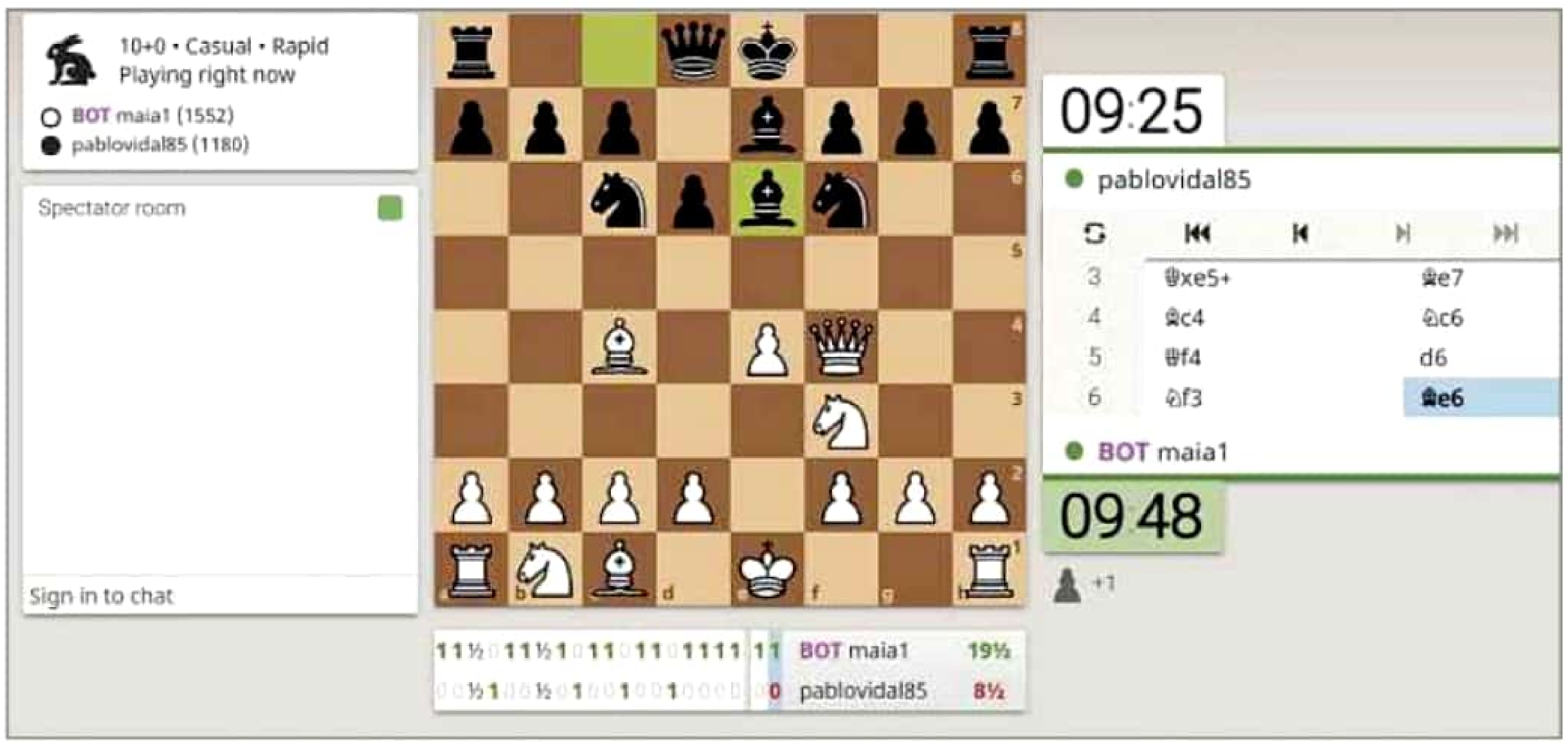
You can also see who's currently viewing a specific file by opening it, then looking for the circular icons at the top right of the window. Hover over the icon to see which person it belongs to. Bear in mind that if someone without a Gmail address is accessing the document link, they'll be listed as Anonymous.

**Next issue:** Set up a Google Group for your club

# What's All the Fuss About...

# Maia

## Playing chess against a computer no longer means inevitable defeat


10+0 • Casual • Rapid
Playing right now
○ BOT maia1 (1552)
● pablovidal85 (1180)
Spectator room
Sign in to chat
09:25
pablovidal85
3 ♕xe5+ ♚e7
4 ♗c4 ♞c6
5 ♕f4 d6
6 ♘f3 ♚e6
BOT maia1
09:48
+1
BOT maia1 19½
pablovidal85 8½

### What is it?

An artificially intelligent (AI) chess program with a difference – you might actually be able to beat it.

### How come?

Because it's been built to mimic the kind of mistakes humans make. This makes it different to other chess computers, which have been programmed to win at all costs.

### How difficult are *they* to beat?

So difficult that no human has conquered a computer in a tournament in 15 years. Ever since Deep Blue famously beat Garry Kasparov in 1997, chess computers have become increasingly more formidable, calculating millions of moves every second. This is a significant advantage because even after just four moves by each player, the number of potential positions is in the hundreds of billions.

Also, they never become hungry or tired, nor lose concentration. And they don't suffer the physical problems that afflict humans. You won't see a chess computer lose a game because it's got a bad case of indigestion.

### But Maia might?

Well, perhaps not because of indigestion, but it has been programmed to be as fallible as humans. Built by AI researchers at Cornell University in New York state, the University of Toronto and Microsoft, Maia was taught not to pick the best available move, but to work out what a human would do. It could therefore predict the type of mistakes made by players at specific skill levels, and has been developed into nine versions to play humans with ratings between 1100 and 1900 – ranging from novice players to strong amateurs.

### Does that make it easier to play against?

Not just easier, but more enjoyable. There's little fun in playing a chess program that you know will always end up checkmating you in a move you could never have foreseen. Maia's developers claim that it "matches human play more closely than any chess engine ever created", so it feels like you could actually be playing another person rather than a set of algorithms. This is significant for another reason: it could help humans keep up with the great advances in AI.

### Is there a danger we're getting left behind?

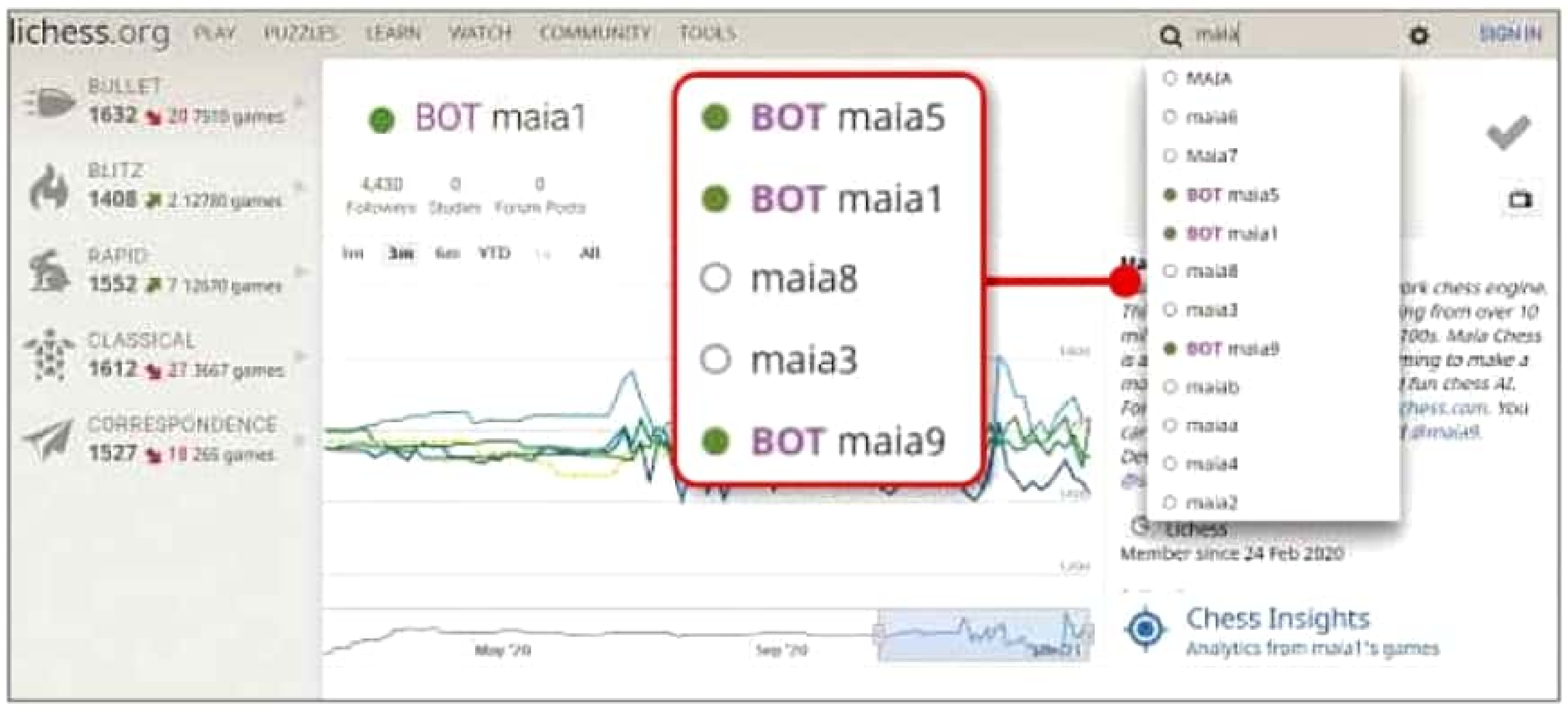
Yes. AI surpasses our abilities in so many areas that there's a risk we'll struggle to work with the technology in any meaningful way. Specifically, algorithms approach problems very differently from humans, and so come up with analysis and solutions that may not be appropriate. But if AI can be taught to think more like a human, it can identify the mistakes we make and help us to overcome them. Chess is perfectly suited to this task because it's easy to conduct experiments in the game that help to reveal more complex truths in other areas of research. For this reason, it's often called the fruit fly of artificial intelligence.

### Er, why?

Fruit flies have relatively small genomes, short life cycles and a large number of offspring, all of which make them ideal for genetic research. Over time they've become the model organism for geneticists, just as chess is the ideal game for AI scientists.

### Can I play against Maia now?

Yes, on the free site Lichess (https://lichess.org). As well as thousands of human players, there are three Maia bots (maia1, maia5, and maia9 – rated 1100, 1500 and 1900 respectively). To find one, click the magnifying-glass icon at the top right then type the name (see screenshot left). If it's already playing, you can watch as a spectator, as the main screenshot shows above. We may hang around to pick up some tips.


lichess.org
PLAY
PUZZLES
LEARN
WATCH
COMMUNITY
TOOLS
maia
SIGN IN
BULLET 1632
BLITZ 1408
RAPID 1552
CLASSICAL 1612
CORRESPONDENCE 1527
BOT maia1
BOT maia5
BOT maia1
○ maia8
○ maia3
BOT maia9
Member since 24 Feb 2020
Chess Insights
Analytics from maia1's games

**You can play against three different levels of Maia on Lichess**

# REMOVE ALL WINDOWS JUNK

Fed up with Microsoft foisting unwanted apps, unnecessary files and annoying ads on your system? **Robert Irvine** explains how to purge your PC of junk to reclaim space, speed and peace of mind

Computer manufacturers such as HP, Lenovo and Dell are notorious for preinstalling their own software on PCs and laptops. Often referred to as 'bloatware', none of these tools are essential for Windows to function, and can safely be ignored or uninstalled.

Sadly, this isn't as simple with the bloatware that Microsoft installs itself, which not only clutters your desktop, menus and hard drive, but also consumes valuable system resources. When was the last time you opened Groove Music, Dolby Access, and games like Bubble Witch 3 Saga? We're guessing 'never', so why do you need this junk in your Start menu?

While Microsoft can't be held responsible for the temporary files and other unwanted items left on your PC by third-party programs, it does a poor job of tidying up its own mess. Junk generated by Windows and its built-in tools can take up more space on your hard drive than anything else, especially massive Windows Update files that you'll never need again.

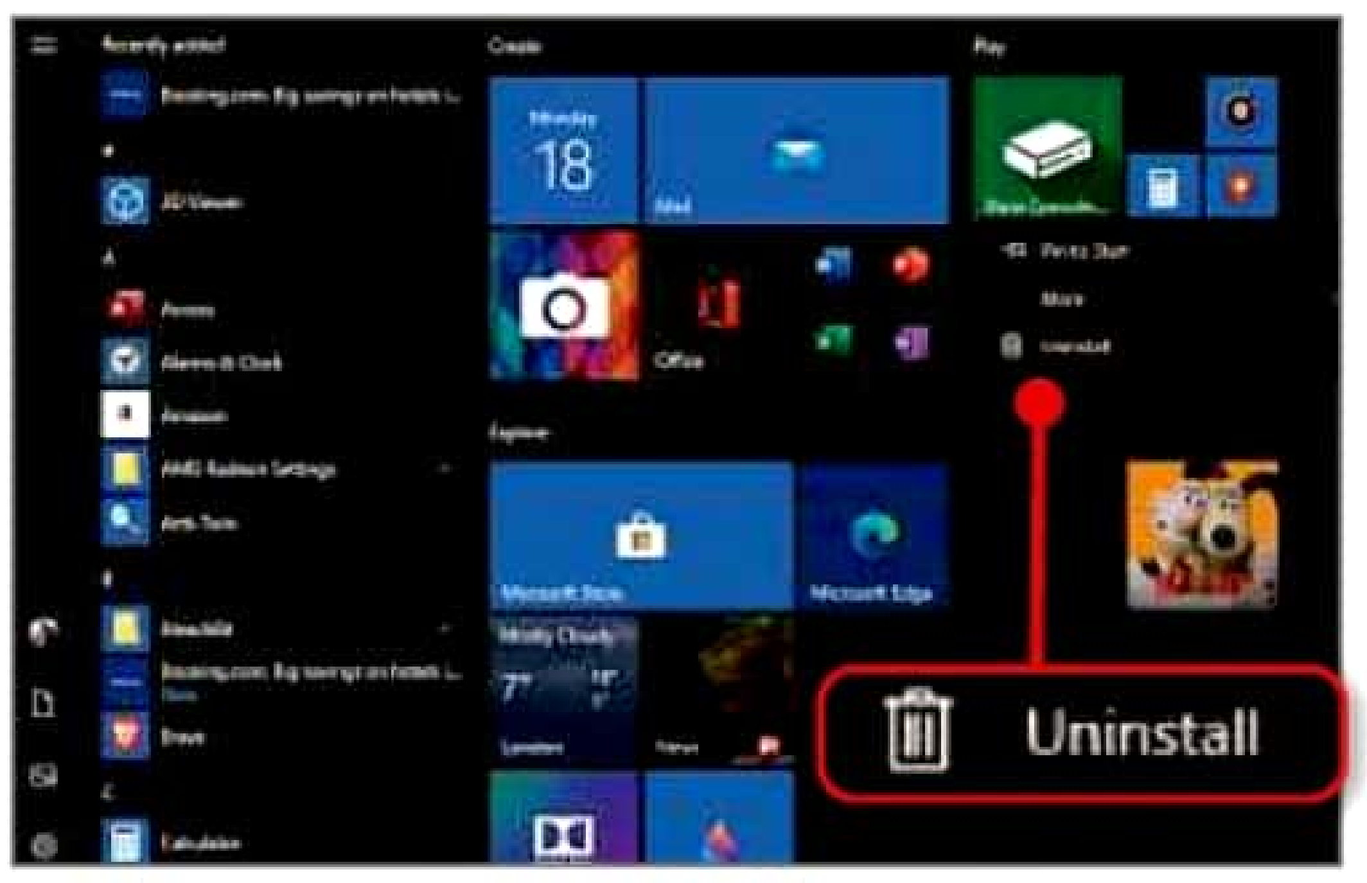
Even more annoying are the adverts and pop-ups that Microsoft foists on us – especially as the company charges £120 for Windows 10 Home (nearly double that for Pro).

In this feature, we explain how to remove junk – old and new – that Microsoft smuggles in with Windows 10, and how you can prevent it from being reinstalled by the next system update. Purging many of these tools, files and nagging messages from your PC can be as simple as tweaking a few hidden settings, while others involve a brute-force approach using Command Prompt, PowerShell or the Windows registry. Here, we explain the easiest, safest and most effective ways to rid yourself of Windows rubbish for good.

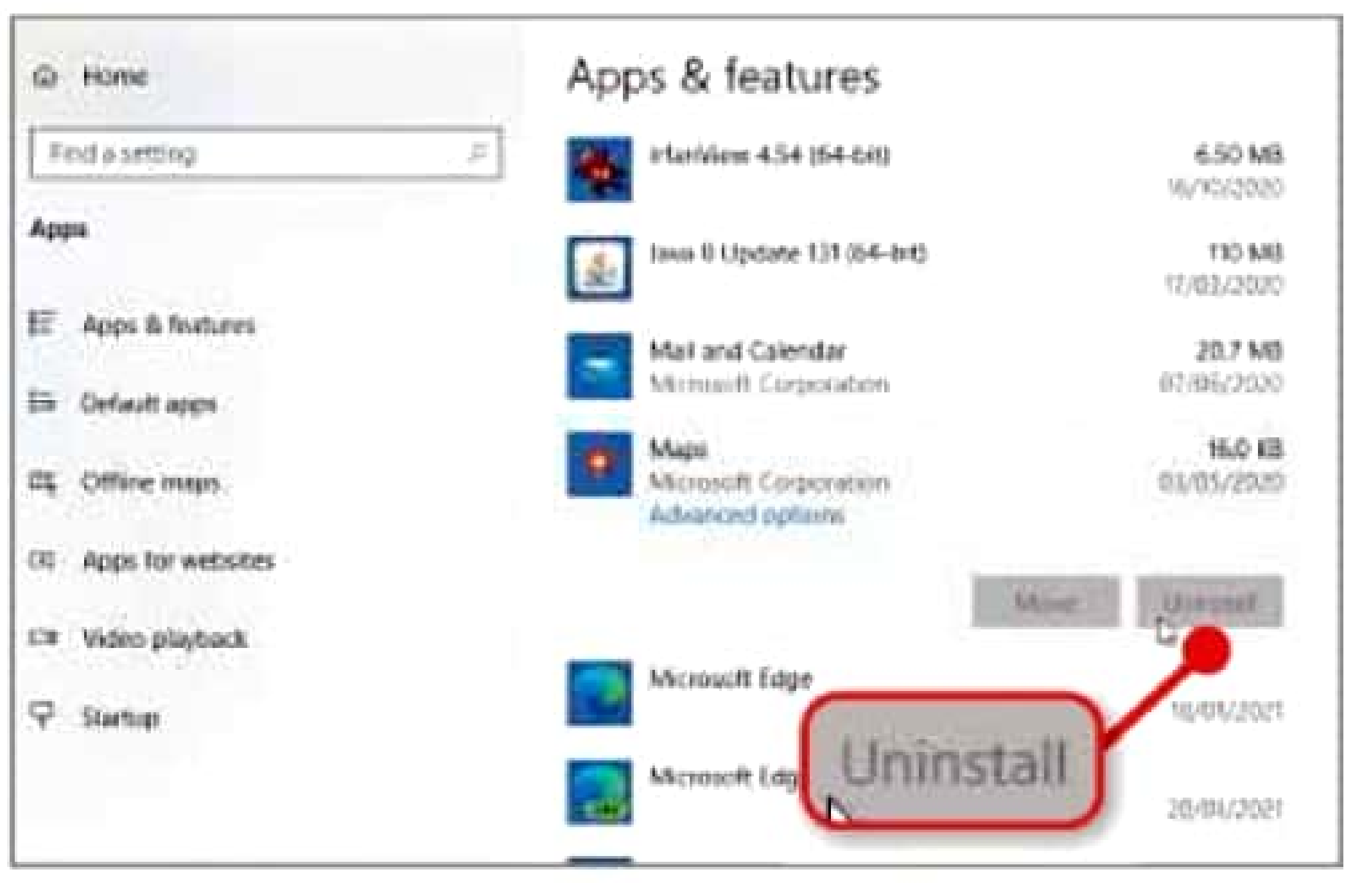
## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Remove apps that Windows Settings won't
- Uninstall OneDrive, Cortana and Edge – and stop them reinstalling
- Safely delete old Windows updates and bulky system restore points
- Block annoying ads in your taskbar, the Start menu and File Explorer

## REMOVE UNWANTED APPS & TOOLS



You can uninstall Windows apps you'll never use from the main Start menu



Microsoft apps that have their Uninstall button greyed-out can't be removed in Settings

### Remove junk apps from the Start menu

The most obvious form of junk in Windows 10 are apps from the Microsoft Store that appear as tiles in your Start menu. You may find some of these tools useful, such as the Mail, Calendar and Calculator apps, but have probably never touched Xbox Console Companion, Fitbit Coach, Dolby Access, Groove Music, Candy Crush Saga and many more.

It's a cheeky way for Microsoft to push its products and those of third-party companies who have paid them for the privilege. For most Windows users these apps are a waste of storage space and an annoying distraction. Even the tiles for Office tools only open trial versions of Word, Excel, OneNote and PowerPoint, which aren't much use if you're not prepared to pay over the long term.

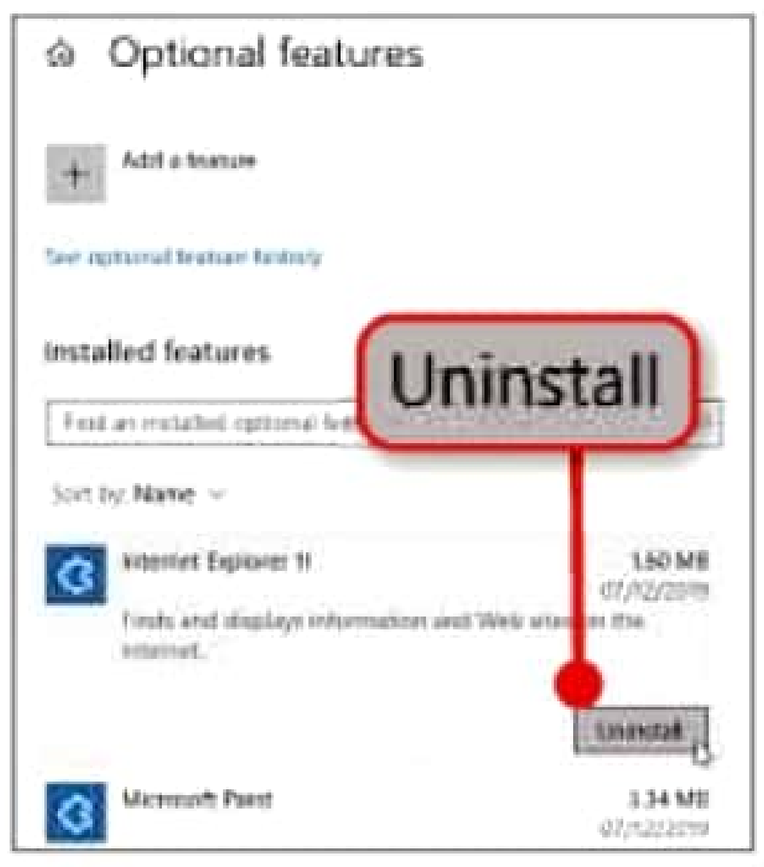
You can remove this junk from the Start menu by right-clicking the relevant tile and selecting 'Unpin from Start'. However, this will just hide them, not banish them from your PC. To delete an item permanently, right-click its tile or its entry in the main Start menu, choose Uninstall (see screenshot above right) and confirm that you want to remove the app and its "related info". Alternatively, open Settings (press the Windows key+I), select Apps then find the unwanted item in the list and choose Uninstall.

Repeating these steps for every unwanted Start menu item can take a while, and any uninstalled items are often just replaced with yet more junk apps. Also, the Settings app doesn't always list or let you remove everything installed on your PC (the Uninstall option is greyed out in the screenshot above right). A much better option is to download the excellent free tool O&O AppBuster (www.snipca.com/37141), which lets you uninstall all Microsoft's bloatware in one go – even when that option is greyed-out in Settings. Find out how to use this program in our Mini Workshop below.

### Remove outdated Microsoft programs

Not all junk installed by Microsoft is classified as a Windows app, which means it won't be detected by O&O AppBuster or similar programs such as 10AppsManager (www.snipca.com/37145). This applies to outdated tools such as WordPad, Windows Media Player and Internet Explorer, which you may not even realise are still on your PC.

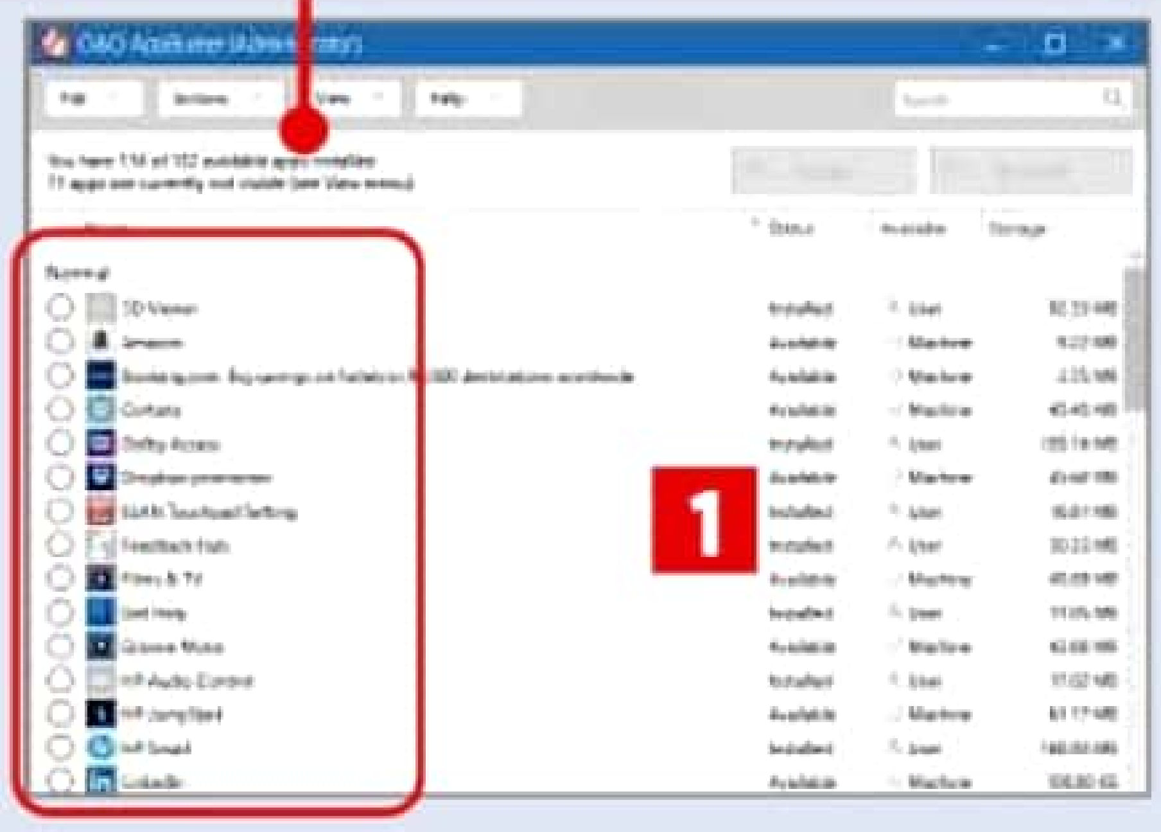
To remove these, return to the Apps section in Settings, then choose 'Optional features'. Select the app you no longer want, then click Uninstall (see screenshot left).



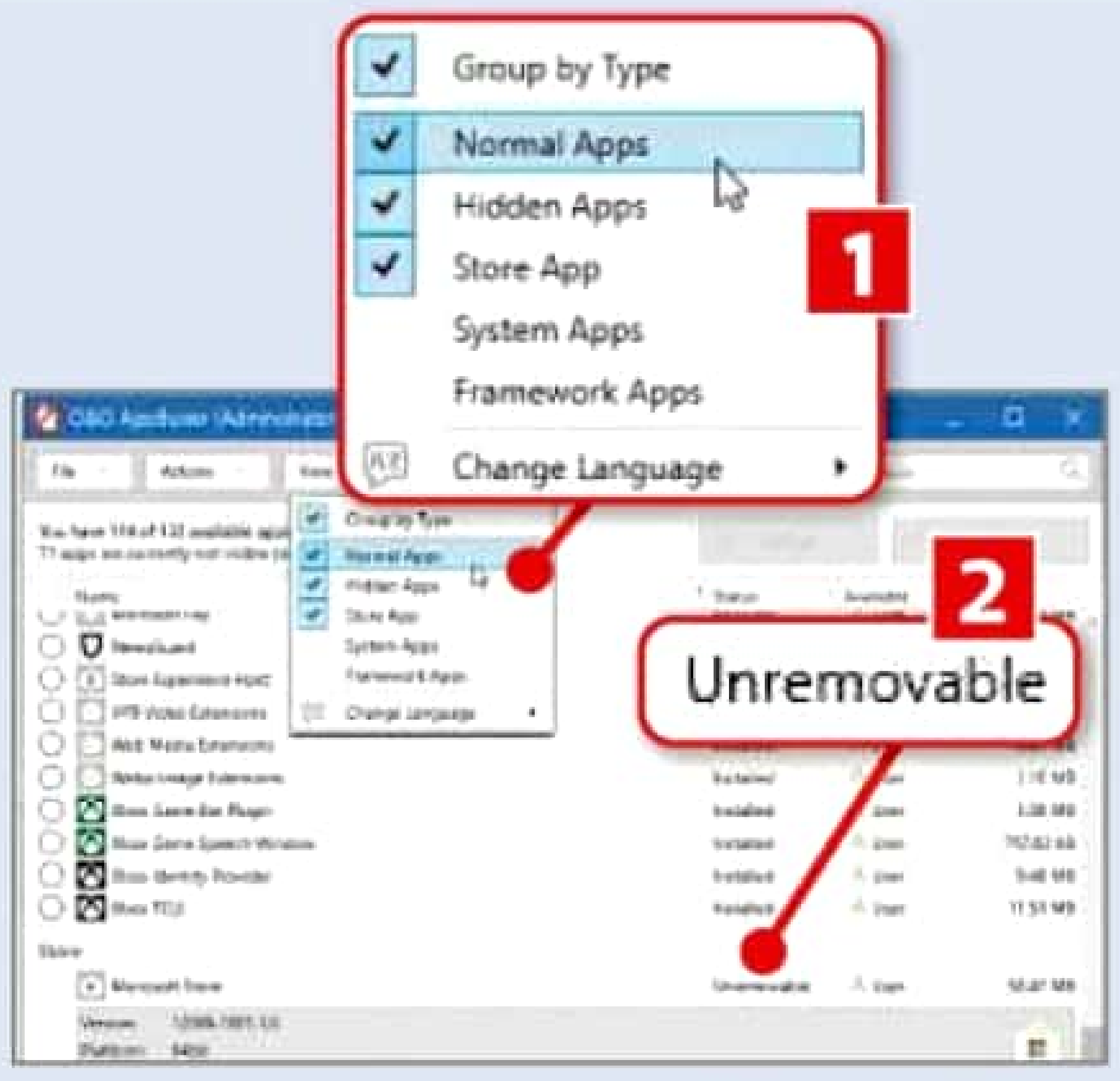
Old Windows programs can be uninstalled through the 'Optional features' section of in Settings

## WORKSHOP Remove junk apps using O&O AppBuster

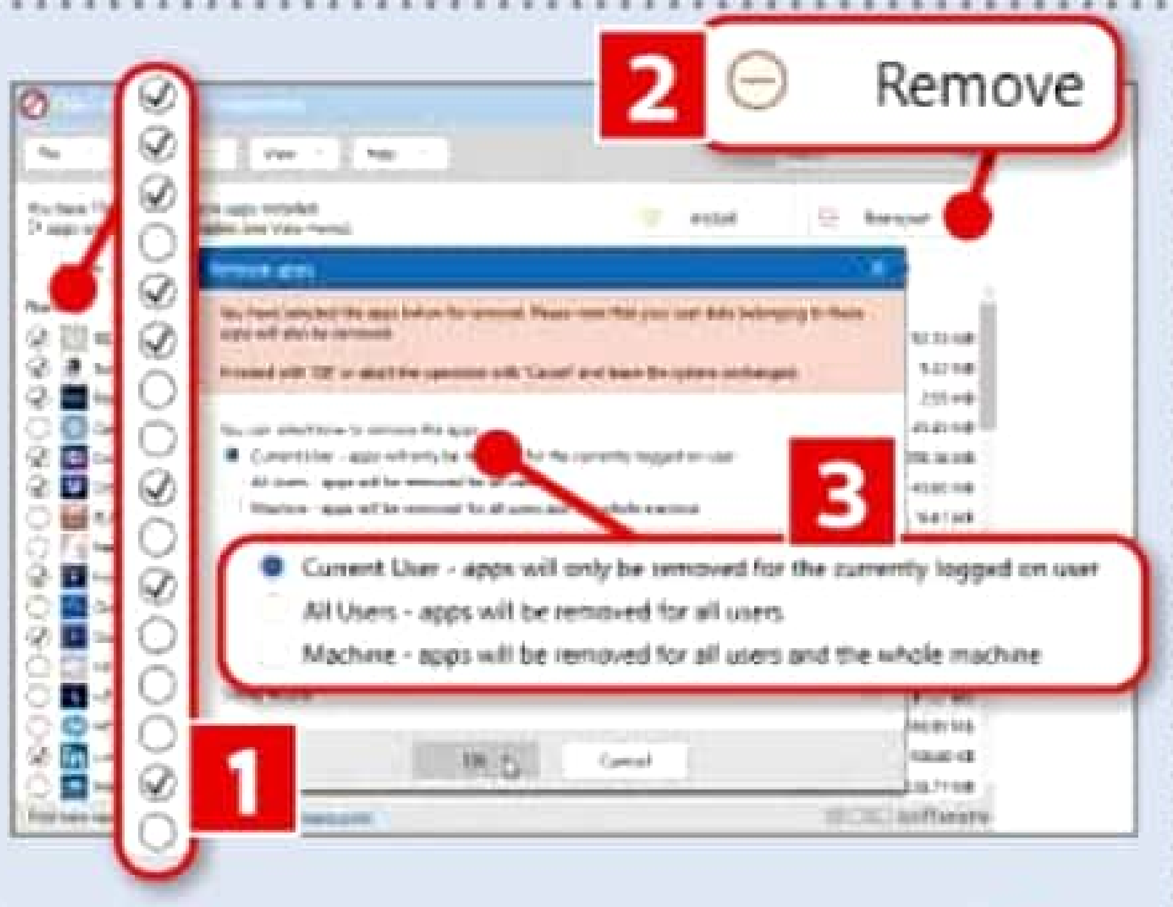
You have 114 of 132 available apps installed.



1 Download and run O&O AppBuster from www.snipca.com/37141 (it doesn't require installation, so won't add to your PC's junk) and it will list all apps installed on your PC **1**. On our system, it found 114 items **2**, 16 more than are listed by Windows in the Settings app.



2 Click the View menu to filter the results by category, such as Normal or Hidden apps **1**. Select an entry to view the app's size and location and whether it's listed as Installed, Available (which means the Start menu tile is just an advert) or – as in the case of the Microsoft Store app – Unremovable **2**.

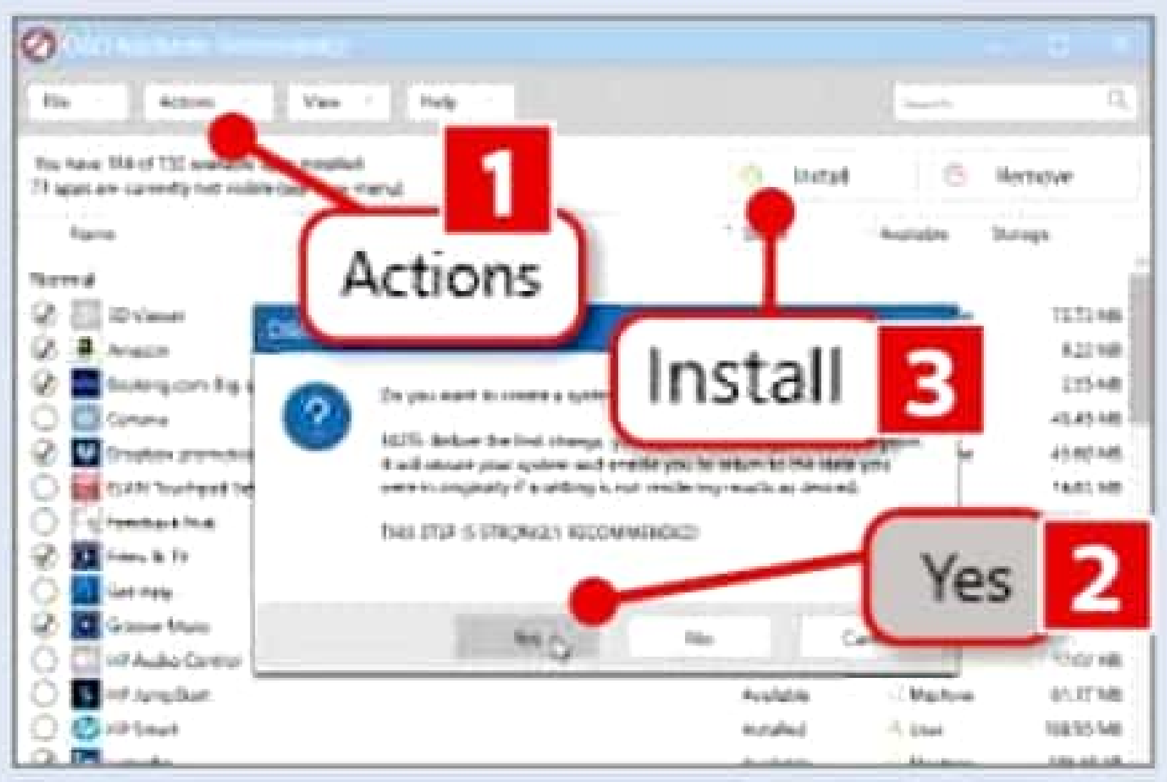


● Current User - apps will only be removed for the currently logged on user

All Users - apps will be removed for all users

Machine - apps will be removed for all users and the whole machine

3 Click the buttons **1** next to the junk entries you want to uninstall, then click the Remove button in the top-right corner **2**. Specify whether to remove these apps for the Current User (just you), All Users (everyone who uses your computer) or Machine (your entire system, permanently) **3**.



4 If you want to create a system restore point before uninstalling, click Cancel, then click the Actions menu **1**, choose 'Create a system restore point' and click Yes **2**. Otherwise, click No to proceed. You can easily reinstall apps later by selecting them in the list and clicking the Install button **3**.

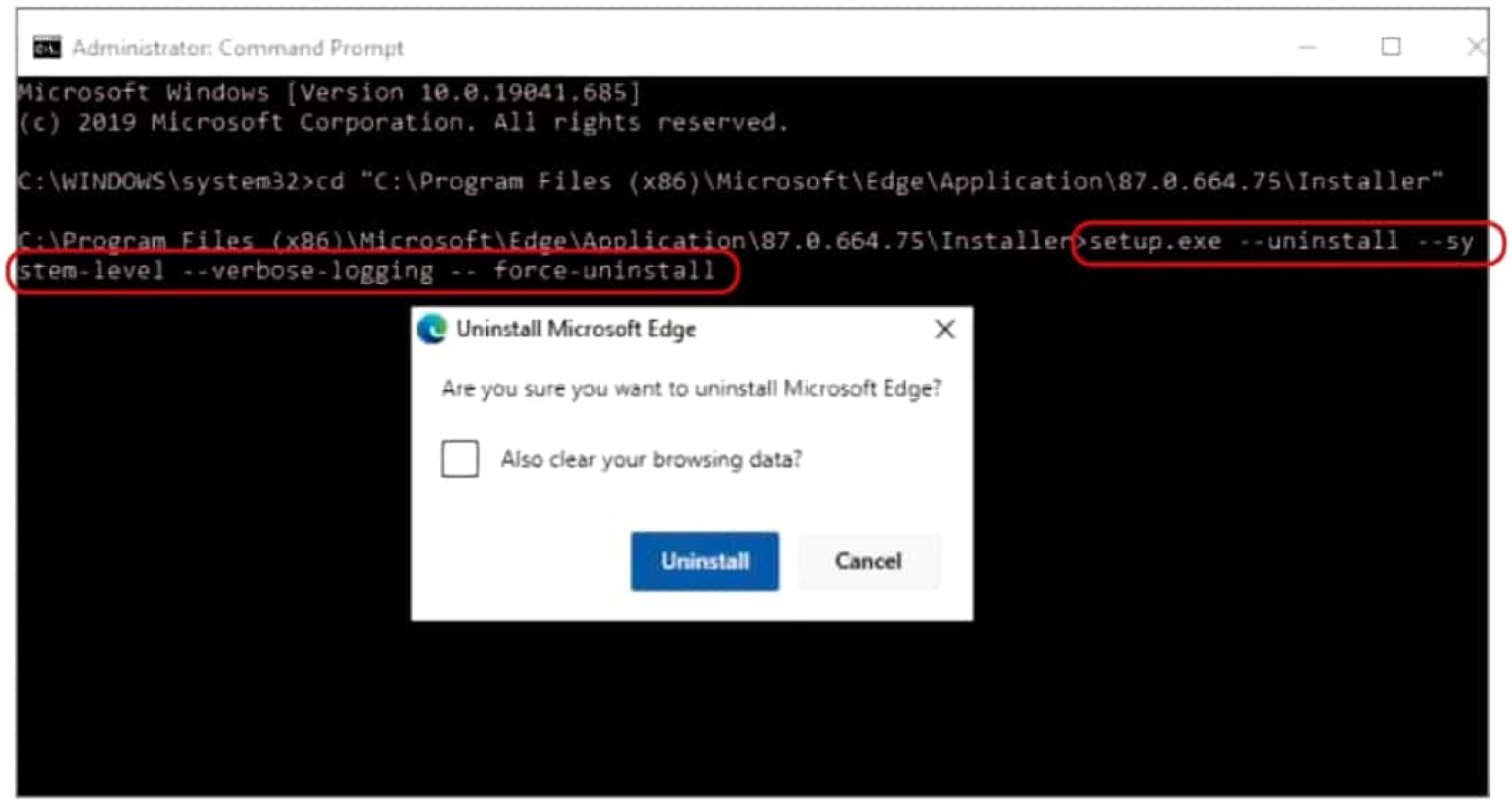
## Uninstall Microsoft Edge permanently

Permanently removing Microsoft's Edge browser is more difficult. This isn't junk, of course – in fact it's now a worthy rival to Chrome and Firefox. However, anyone who doesn't use it may not want it hogging precious space on their PC.

Microsoft claims that Edge is "an essential component of our operating system and can't be uninstalled", but this isn't strictly true. If you installed the Chromium-based Edge yourself, rather than having it foisted on you via a Windows Update, you should be able to remove it from the Apps section of the Settings app. If not (the Uninstall button will be greyed-out), you can uninstall Edge through the Command Prompt, although this is a trickier process.

First, open File Explorer and navigate to **C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft\Edge\Application** where you should see a folder named '87.0.664.75' or similar (this is the version of Edge you have installed). Open this folder, then the Install folder. Press Alt+D to access the address bar, then Ctrl+C to copy the full address. Next, click the Start button, type cmd, then click the 'Run as administrator' option.

When Command Prompt opens, type cd followed by a space, then press Ctrl+V to paste the address you copied earlier. To remove Edge, type setup.exe --uninstall --system-level --verbose-logging -- force-uninstall (see screenshot above right) and press Enter. Alternatively, copy this command from our Pastebin account at www.snipca.com/37187. Finally, click Uninstall and restart your PC to remove Edge from your system.



```
Microsoft Windows [Version 10.0.19041.685]
(c) 2019 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

C:\WINDOWS\system32>cd "C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft\Edge\Application\87.0.664.75\Installer"

C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft\Edge\Application\87.0.664.75\Installer>setup.exe --uninstall --sy
stem-level --verbose-logging -- force-uninstall
```

Uninstall Microsoft Edge

Are you sure you want to uninstall Microsoft Edge?

☐ Also clear your browsing data?

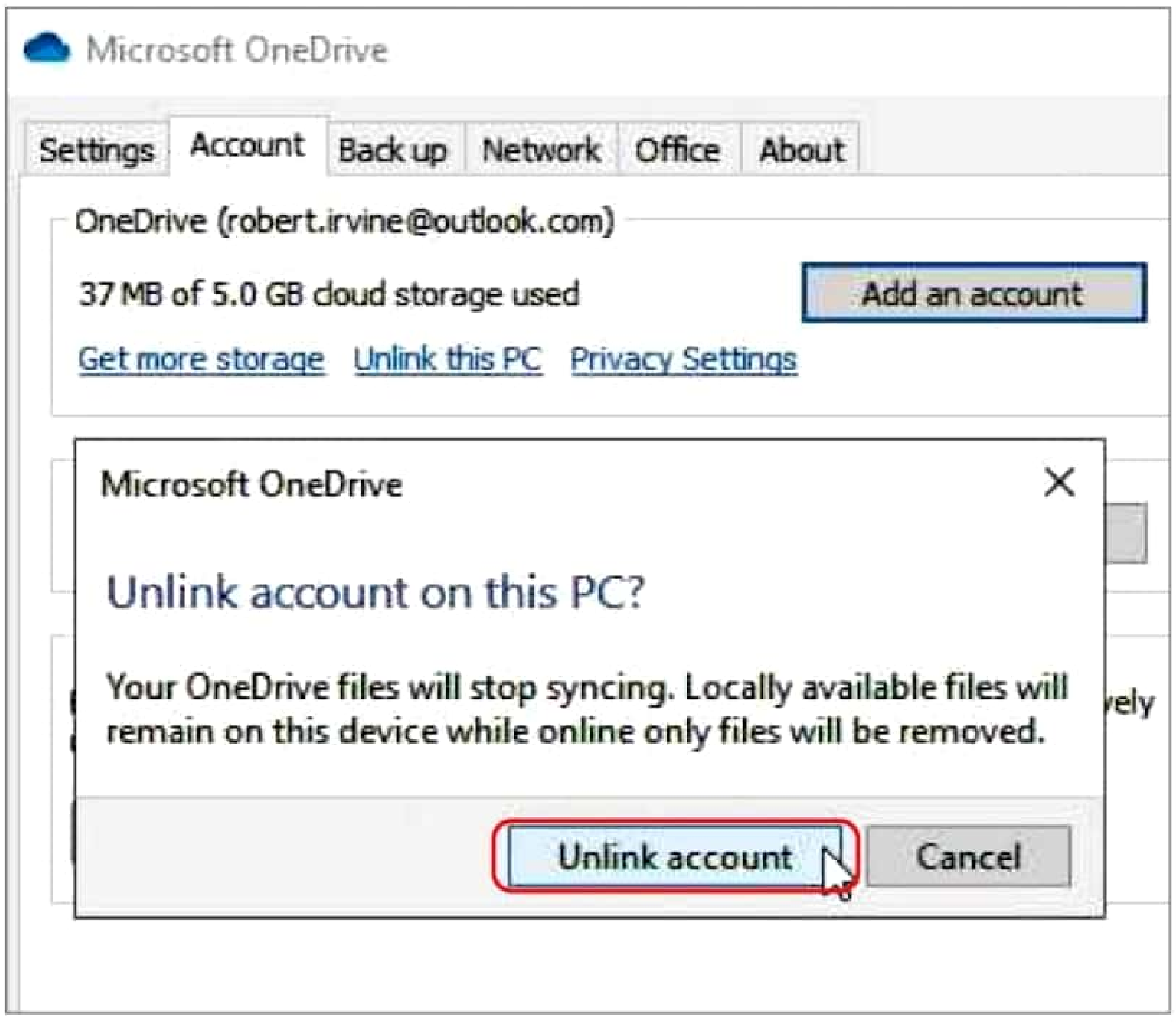
Uninstall Microsoft Edge by using this command in Command Prompt

Microsoft has a tool called Blocker Toolkit (www.snipca.com/37147) that will prevent Edge from being reinstalled in the next Windows Update, but it's not easy to use. A much simpler option is neverEdge (www.snipca.com/37149), which you simply download and double-click to block the automatic installation of Edge. Ignore the warning from Windows about the program being unsafe and click 'Run anyway'. This won't stop you installing the browser manually, should you choose to.

## Unlink or uninstall OneDrive

As with Edge, Microsoft preinstalls OneDrive in Windows in the hope that you'll use it for all your online storage needs. But if you use a rival service such as Google Drive, OneDrive just gets in the way and uses memory in the background, slowing your boot time and constantly nagging you to sync your files.

There are two things you can do to stop OneDrive bothering you. The first is to unlink it from your computer, which disables the app but doesn't uninstall it. Right-click the OneDrive icon in your taskbar (you may need to click the 'Show hidden icons' arrow to see this), then choose 'Help & Settings', then Settings. On the Account tab, click 'Unlink this PC', then confirm you want to unlink your OneDrive account (see screenshot below left).



OneDrive (robert.irvine@outlook.com)

37 MB of 5.0 GB cloud storage used

Microsoft OneDrive

Unlink account on this PC?

Your OneDrive files will stop syncing. Locally available files will remain on this device while online only files will be removed.

**Unlink OneDrive from your PC to stop it slowing your system**

To remove OneDrive completely, go to Settings, Apps, 'Apps & features', then select Microsoft OneDrive in the list and click Uninstall. This will remove most traces of OneDrive from your PC, but you may still see an empty OneDrive folder in File Explorer. To get rid of this, you'll need to tweak the Windows registry. As always, we recommend making a full backup and creating a system restore point before making any changes to the registry.

Type regedit in the Start menu's search box, select Registry Editor and permit the app to make changes to your device when prompted. Next, navigate to the key: **HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\CLSID\{018D5C66-4533-4307-9B53-224DE2ED1FE6}** Double-click the entry **System.IsPinnedToNameSpaceTree** in the right-hand pane, set its value to 0, then click OK.

In 64bit systems of Windows, you'll need to repeat this step for the key: **HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\WOW6432Node\CLSID\{018D5C66-4533-4307-9B53-224DE2ED1FE6}**

You can copy both keys from our Pastebin account at www.snipca.com/37190 then paste them into the Registry Editor's address bar.

Restart your PC to complete OneDrive's removal. You can reinstall the app from

## Five preinstalled Microsoft apps you should replace now

### Mail and Calendar

Windows 10's built-in email app is very basic and lacks proper mail filters. Despite the name, the calendar isn't integrated, but opens in a separate app window.

**Replace with**

Thunderbird www.thunderbird.net

This is a full-featured free email client with loads of customisation options.

### Photos

Although it offers some useful features such as photo slideshows, the Photos app is slow and rudimentary compared with traditional image-viewing programs.

**Replace with**

FastStone Image Viewer www.faststone.org

FastStone is speedy, sophisticated and packed with editing tools and effects.

### Sticky Notes

This app undoubtedly has a nostalgic charm, but the sticky notes you create don't actually 'stick' on top of other windows, which surely defeats their purpose.

**Replace with**

Stickies www.snipca.com/37165

This tool provides an 'always-on-top' option and also lets you set notes to display when a specific app is open (right-click, then select Attach – see screenshot).

### Groove Music

Microsoft has never had much luck with its music ventures, and Groove Music has been downgraded from a streaming service to a mere audio player.

**Replace with**

Spotify www.spotify.com

It may pay artists a pittance, but its desktop app is the best way to stream music in Windows.

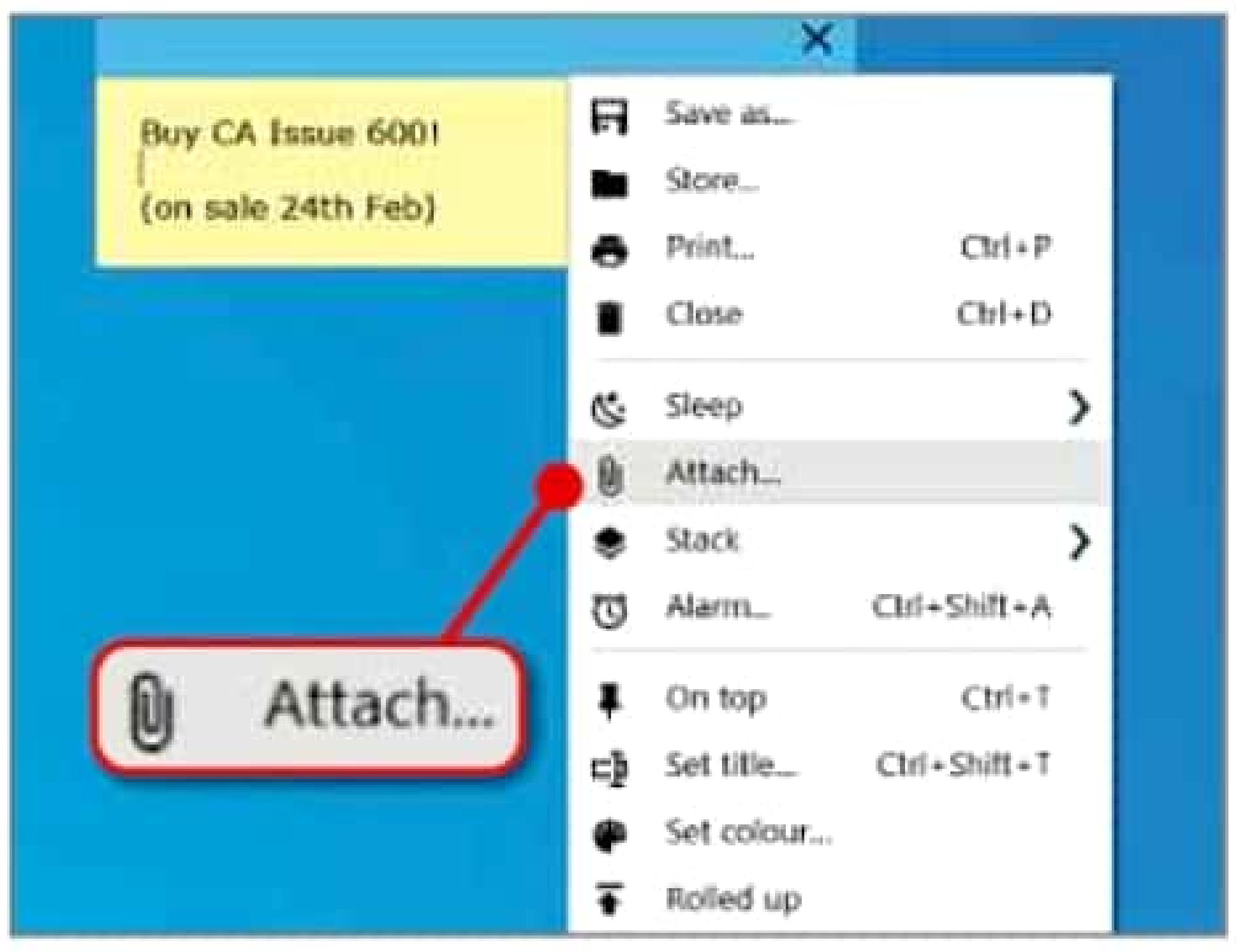
### Skype

Skype usage should have soared during lockdown, but newer video- and voice-call rivals have made Microsoft's service feel clunky and outdated.

**Replace with**

Zoom www.zoom.us

This service makes video calls so simple and fun, it's no wonder it's so popular for both home and business use.



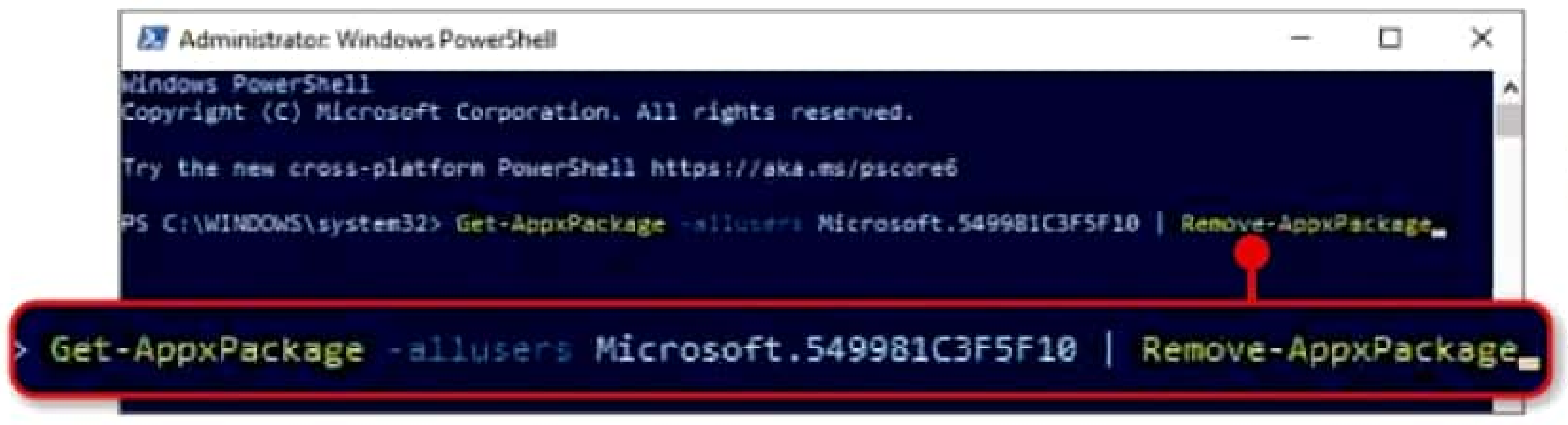
the Microsoft Store (www.snipca.com/37162) should you ever want to use it in future.

## Banish Cortana

Microsoft's unloved voice assistant was once the biggest annoyance in Windows 10, interfering with the search tool and springing into life when you least wanted it. The good news is that the feature is gradually being phased out, and it's now easy to hide Cortana by right-clicking an empty section of the taskbar and deselecting 'Show Cortana button'.

However, you still can't uninstall Cortana in the usual way (that option is greyed-out in the Settings app). Clicking 'Advanced options' lets you stop Cortana running on startup and terminates the app's background processes, but you're more or less stuck with Cortana.

Unless, that is, you use a lesser-known command in Windows PowerShell. Click the Start button, type `powershell` in the Windows search box and click 'Run as administrator'. When PowerShell opens, type the following command:



```
Windows PowerShell
Copyright (C) Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

Try the new cross-platform PowerShell https://aka.ms/pscore6

PS C:\WINDOWS\system32> Get-AppxPackage -allusers Microsoft.549981C3F5F10 | Remove-AppxPackage_
```

```
Get-AppxPackage -allusers Microsoft.549981C3F5F10 | Remove-AppxPackage_
```

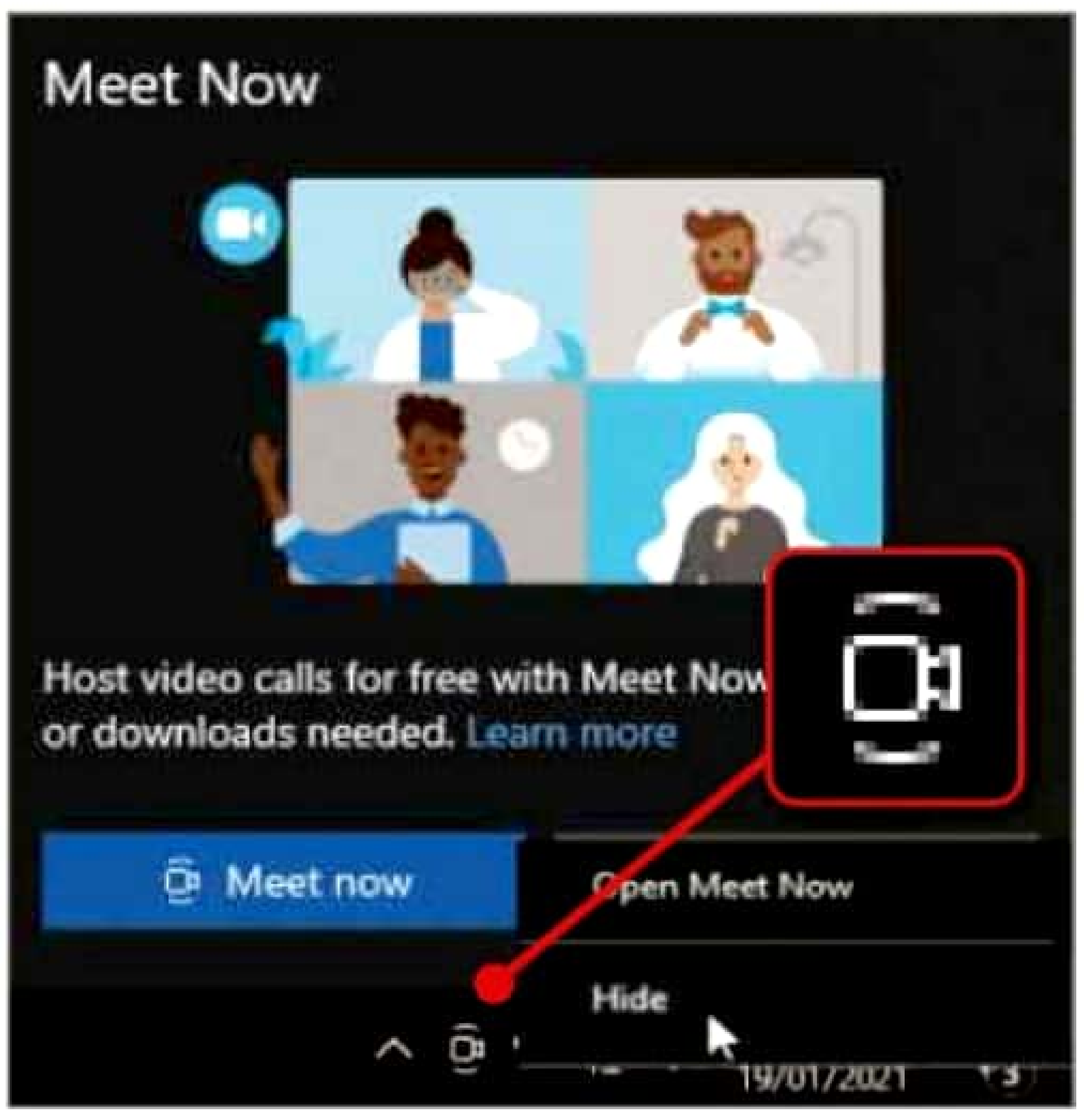
Uninstall Cortana by typing this command into PowerShell

`Get-AppxPackage -allusers Microsoft.549981C3F5F10 | Remove-AppxPackage` (see screenshot below left) or copy the command from www.snipca.com/37193. Restart your PC and Cortana will be no more. You can always reinstall the app from the Microsoft Store (www.snipca.com/37181) if you miss it.

## Remove Skype's Meet Now shortcut

Cortana's days may be numbered, but in the Windows 10 October 2020 Update, Microsoft added another taskbar option you may find just as redundant. Meet Now (www.snipca.com/37164) is a new Skype feature that lets you start video calls and invite people who don't have a Skype account.

Click the Meet Now icon (a camera with brackets above and below – see screenshot above right) in the system tray to host or join a meeting in the Skype app (if you have it installed) or your browser. Meet Now is free and easy to use, but with so many other video-calling services available, you may find you'll never need it.


Meet Now
Host video calls for free with Meet Now
or downloads needed. Learn more
Meet now
Open Meet Now
Hide
19/01/2021

If you don't use Skype's Meet Now feature, quickly hide it from the taskbar

To remove Meet Now from your taskbar, right-click its icon and choose Hide. Alternatively, right-click the taskbar, choose 'Taskbar settings', then 'Turn system icons on or off' and disable it there. Unfortunately, you can't uninstall the feature from your PC, as even powerful removal tools such as O&O AppBuster (see page 51) don't detect it, but you can tweak the registry to stop the Meet Now button reappearing.

Open the Registry Editor as before, then browse to: **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer** (or copy this address from www.snipca.com/37194).

Right-click the right-hand pane, and select New, then DWORD (32-bit) Value. Name the value **HideSCAMeetNow**, set its value data to 1 and click OK.

Computer active

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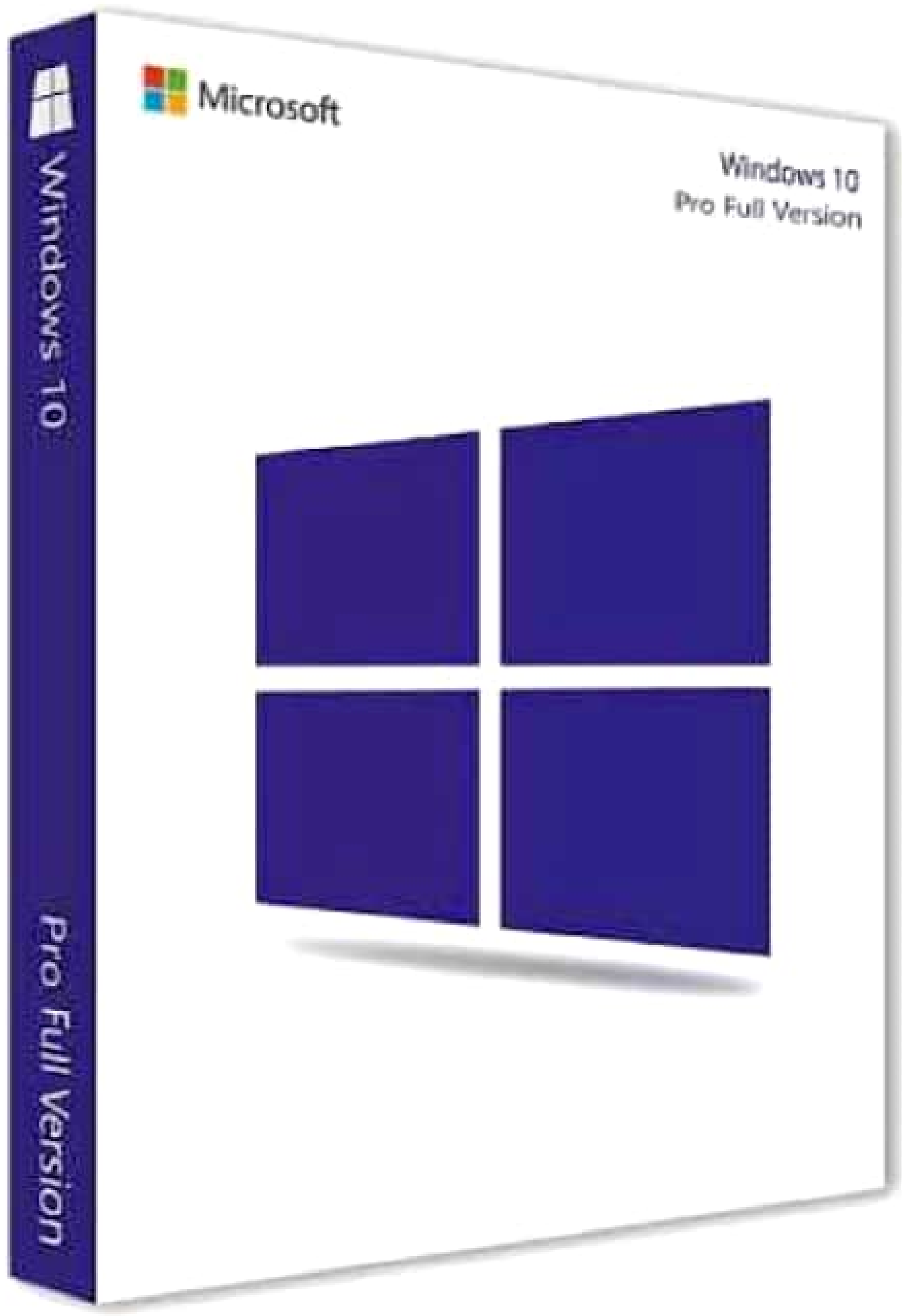
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# REMOVE WINDOWS JUNK FILES & DATA

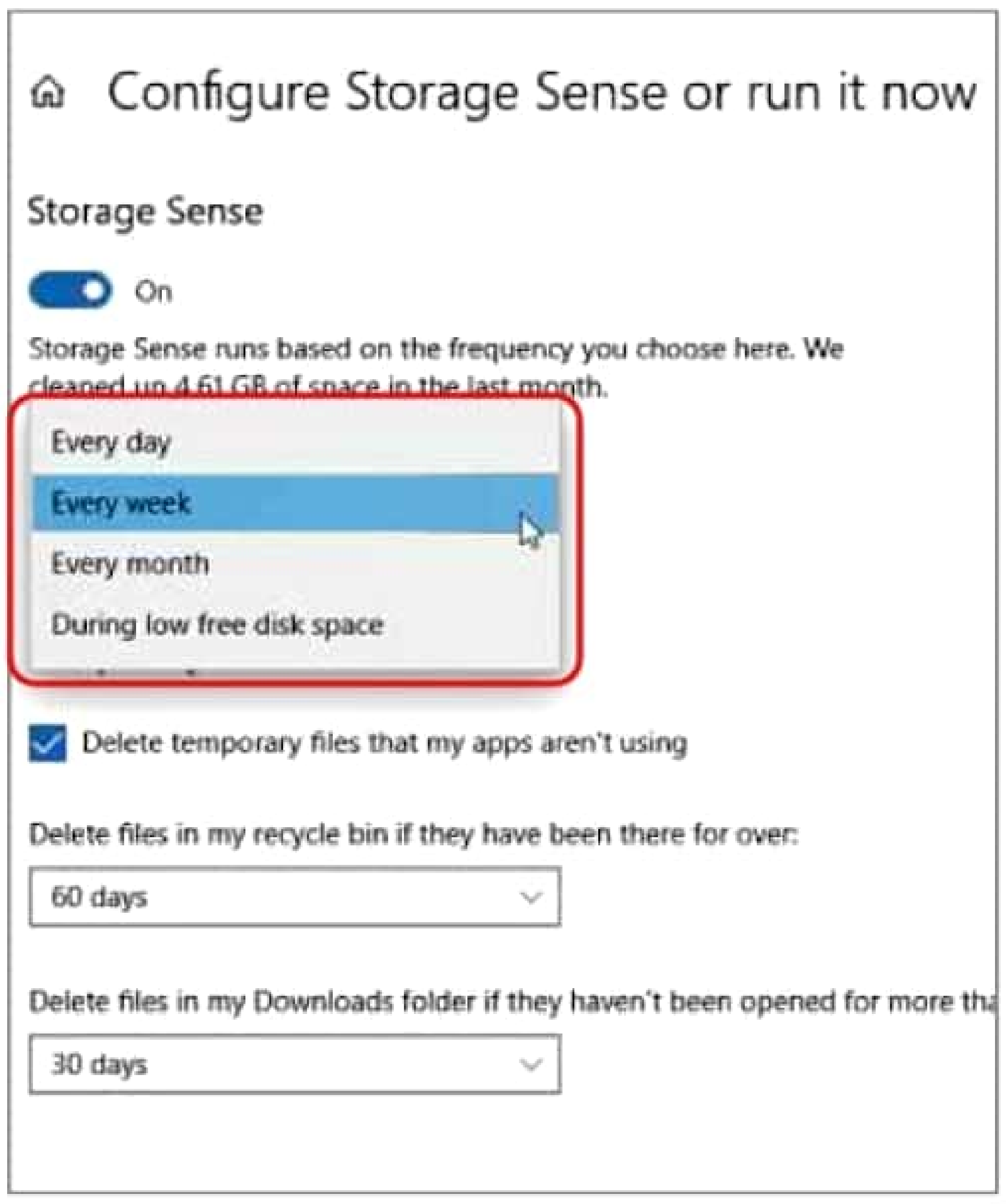
## Delete Windows' temporary files

Not so long ago, you needed to use Windows' slow and fiddly Disk Cleanup tool to clear temporary files from your PC. But Windows 10 introduced a feature called Storage Sense, which Microsoft constantly refines to make removing these files easier, safer (so you don't lose anything important) and more thorough. It works automatically on a schedule of your choice, with the option to remove any additional junk yourself.

To access Storage Sense, open Settings (press Windows key+I), go to System, then Storage and ensure the feature is switched on. Click 'Configure Storage Sense or run it now' and decide how frequently you want to purge your PC of temporary files – daily, weekly, monthly, or whenever you start running low on free drive space (see screenshot below). Below this, tick the box 'Delete temporary files that my apps aren't using' and specify if and how often you want to delete old and unused files from your Recycle Bin and Downloads folder. Click 'Clean now' for an instant clean-up.

Go back to the Storage screen and this time select 'Temporary files'. This section goes further than Storage Sense by providing a breakdown of all the temporary files cluttering your PC's hard drive and how much space they're taking up. These include non-critical files used by Microsoft Defender (such as leftovers from previous updates and scans), Windows Update log files and error reports.

There's also an option to clean up Windows Updates, which we'll come to in a moment. Select all the temporary files you want to delete and click 'Remove files'. Take care here, as ticking the Downloads option means Windows will delete *everything* in your Downloads folder. Instead, we recommend leaving this option unticked and checking how big the folder is (it's 1.99GB in the screenshot below). If your Downloads folder is taking up a lot of space, you'll see which files are the cause by opening the Downloads folder in File Explorer, ordering the contents by size, then deleting those files you don't want.



Storage Sense

On

Storage Sense runs based on the frequency you choose here. We cleaned up 4.61 GB of space in the last month.

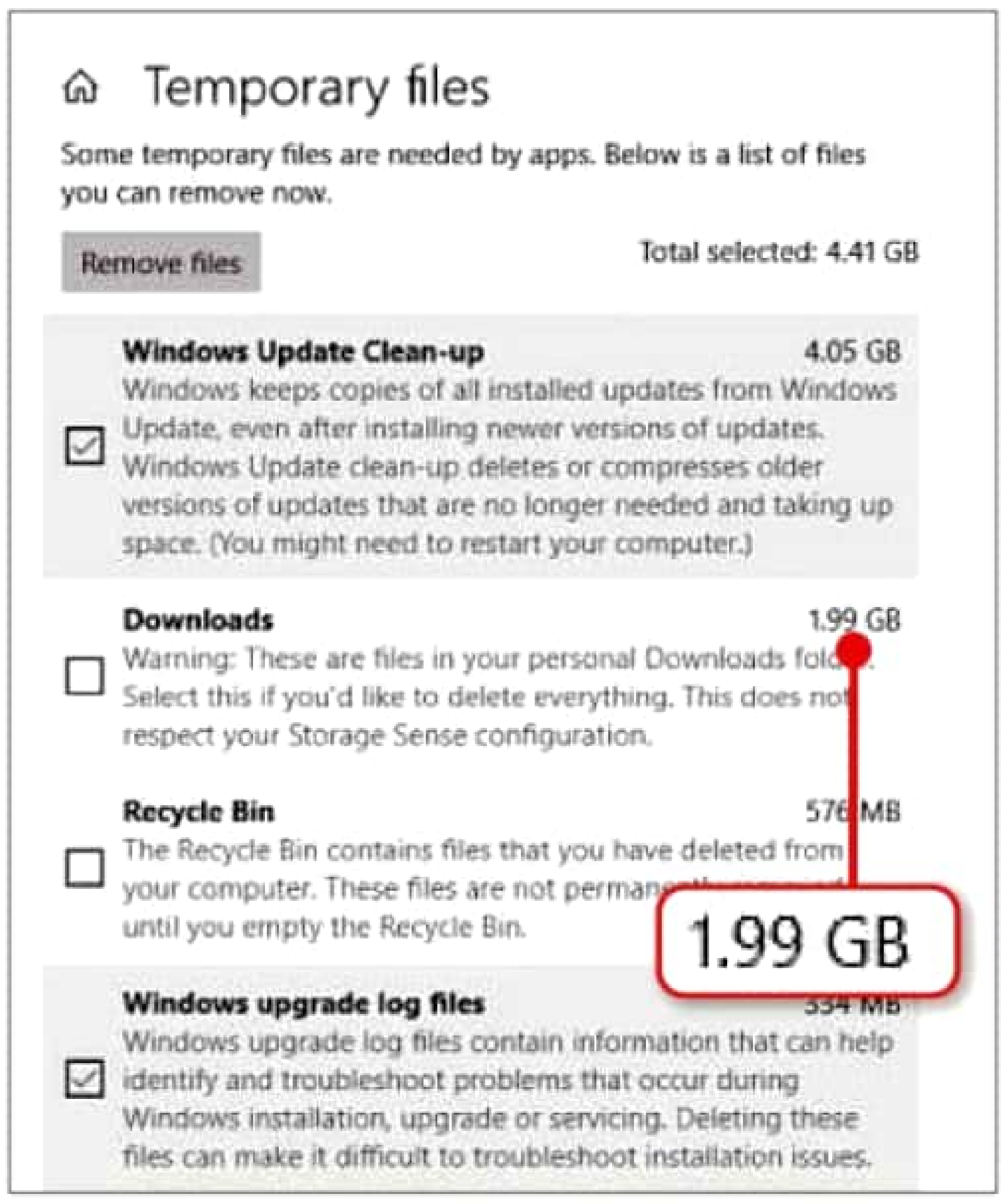
Every day
Every week
Every month
During low free disk space

☑ Delete temporary files that my apps aren't using

Delete files in my recycle bin if they have been there for over: 60 days

Delete files in my Downloads folder if they haven't been opened for more th: 30 days

Schedule the automatic deletion of junk files from Windows using Storage Sense



Some temporary files are needed by apps. Below is a list of files you can remove now.

Total selected: 4.41 GB

☑ **Windows Update Clean-up** 4.05 GB
Windows keeps copies of all installed updates from Windows Update, even after installing newer versions of updates. Windows Update clean-up deletes or compresses older versions of updates that are no longer needed and taking up space. (You might need to restart your computer.)

☐ **Downloads** 1.99 GB
Warning: These are files in your personal Downloads fol. Select this if you'd like to delete everything. This does not respect your Storage Sense configuration.

☐ **Recycle Bin** 576 MB
The Recycle Bin contains files that you have deleted from your computer. These files are not perman until you empty the Recycle Bin.

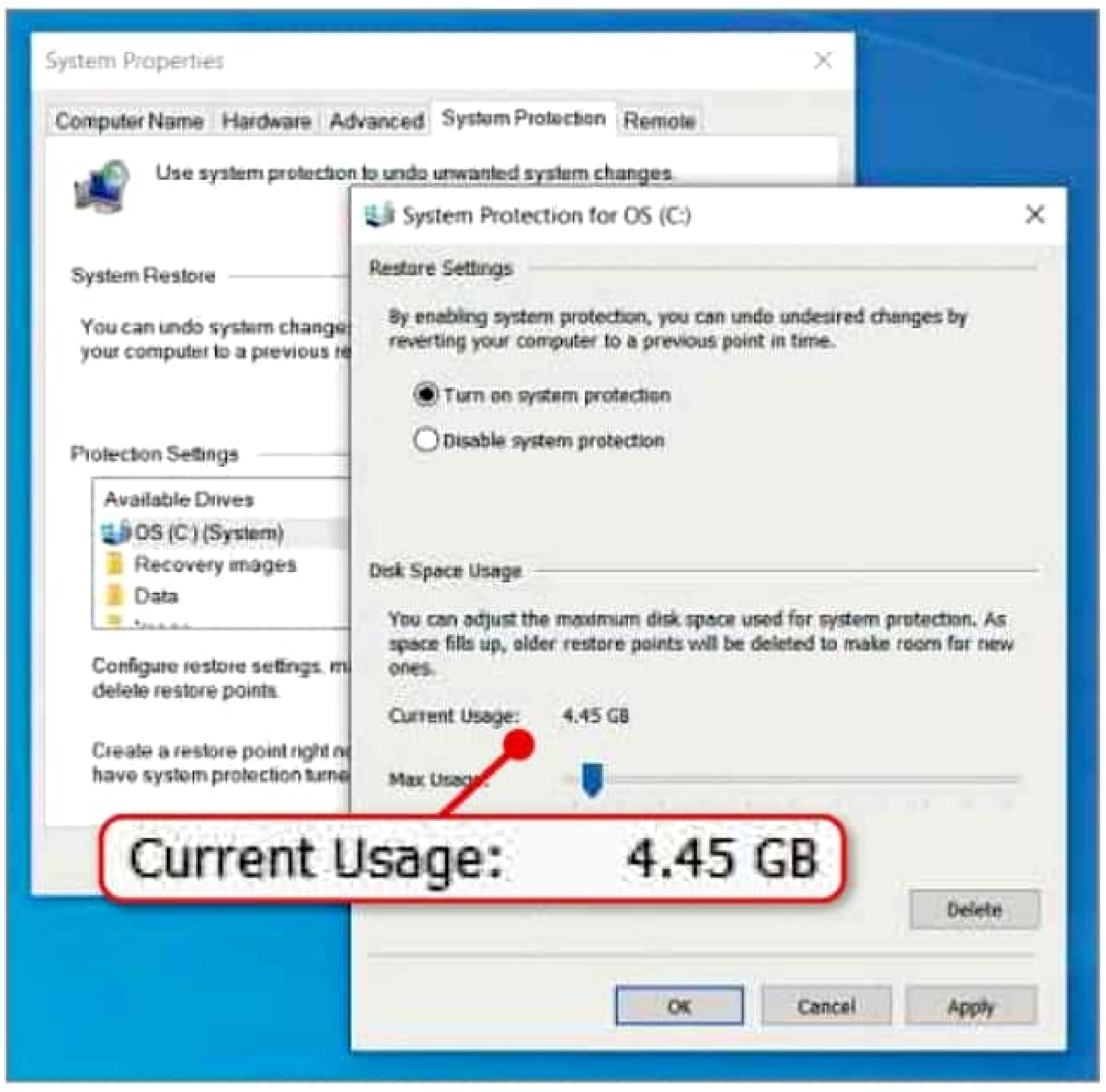
☑ **Windows upgrade log files** 334 MB
Windows upgrade log files contain information that can help identify and troubleshoot problems that occur during Windows installation, upgrade or servicing. Deleting these files can make it difficult to troubleshoot installation issues.

Look in the 'Temporary files' section to see how large your Downloads folder is

## Remove unnecessary Windows updates

Considering the amount of trouble Windows updates cause us all, it's bizarre that Microsoft needlessly hangs on to them indefinitely, especially as they take up a lot of drive space – more than 4GB on our system. You can remove all these junk update files by selecting 'Windows Update Cleanup' in the same 'Temporary files' screen mentioned above.

Added to Windows 10 in 2019, this option also deletes or compresses older versions of updates that are taking up space, and is much faster than the previous method of going through the Disk Cleanup tool. Note that this won't delete temporary files caused by Feature Updates. Windows holds these for 10 days after the update (allowing you to uninstall and roll back to the previous version), after which it deletes them whether you like it or not.



Use system protection to undo unwanted system changes.

You can undo system change your computer to a previous re

Configure restore settings, m delete restore points.

Create a restore point right n have system protection turne

By enabling system protection, you can undo undesired changes by reverting your computer to a previous point in time.

● Turn on system protection
○ Disable system protection

You can adjust the maximum disk space used for system protection. As space fills up, older restore points will be deleted to make room for new ones.

Current Usage: 4.45 GB

Max Usage:

Check how much hard-drive space System Restore takes up (4.45GB in this case), then set a maximum limit

## Remove old system restore points

As with Windows Updates, the only essential system restore point is usually the most recent one when everything was working properly – previous versions are just wasted space. Microsoft doesn't delete these old restore points automatically, but you can do so yourself through the Disk Cleanup tool.

Click Start, type Disk Cleanup then press Enter (if you're prompted to choose a drive on which to run it, select your main hard drive – usually C: – and click OK). When Disk Cleanup opens, click 'Clean up system files', select your drive again then click OK. Next, click the More Options tab and, in the 'System Restore and Shadow Copies' section, click the Clean Up button to remove all system restore points except the most recent one. Click 'Delete' to confirm.

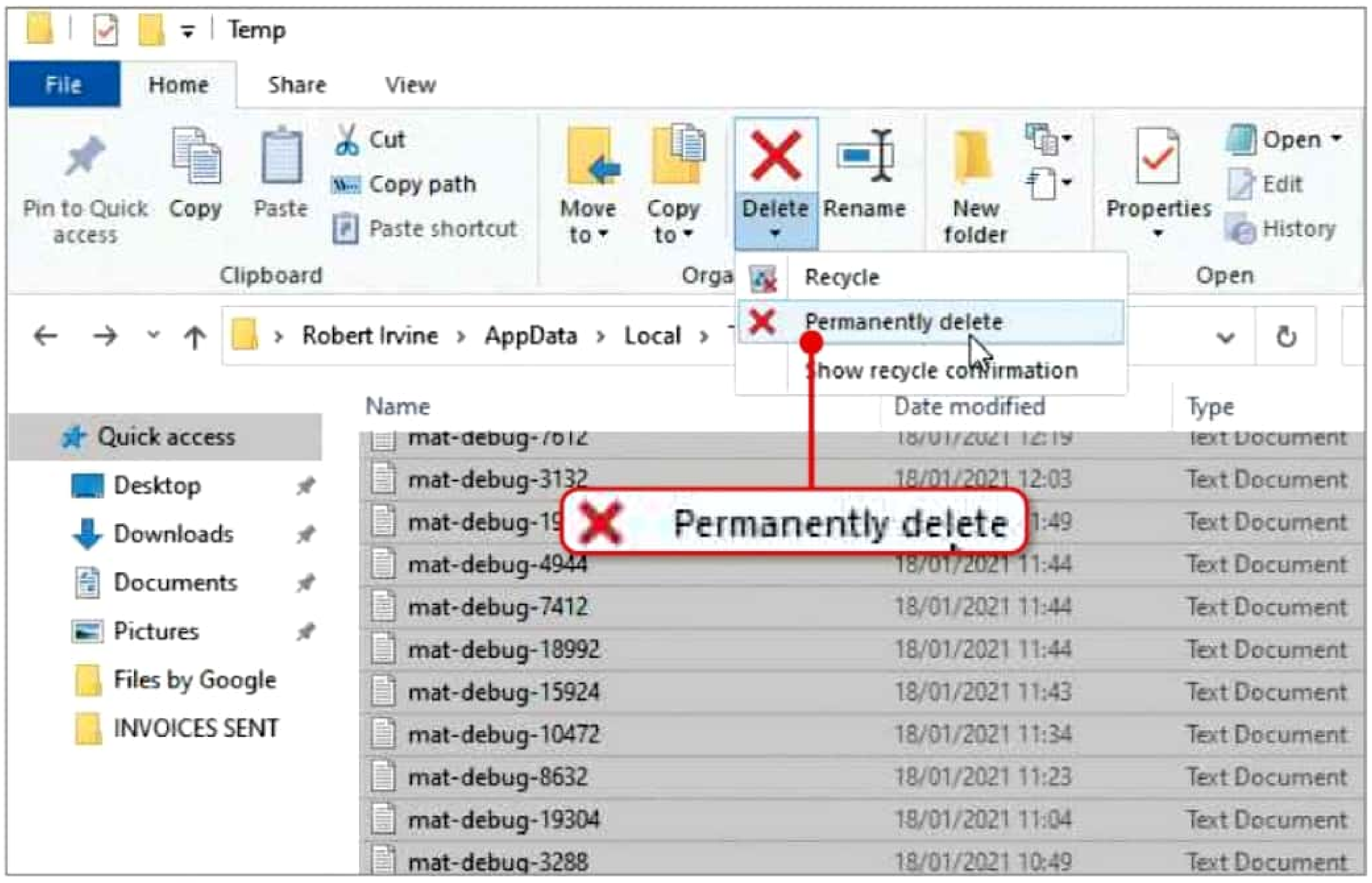
If you prefer to keep multiple restore points, you can control the maximum amount of hard-drive space available to System Restore. Click the Start button, type system restore, then press Enter and click Configure. You'll see how much space System Restore is currently using (our single restore point takes up nearly 4.5GB – see screenshot above), and can then adjust the Max Usage slider accordingly – to store three restore points, you'll need to set this to around 15GB.

## Delete junk data from Windows tools

Temporary files aren't the only junk generated by Windows' tools, though they are the easiest to remove. For a more thorough clear-out of the logs, backups, usage history and other inessential data left behind by File Explorer, Edge, Windows Security, the Clipboard and other tools you use every day, the best tool is BleachBit (www.bleachbit.org).

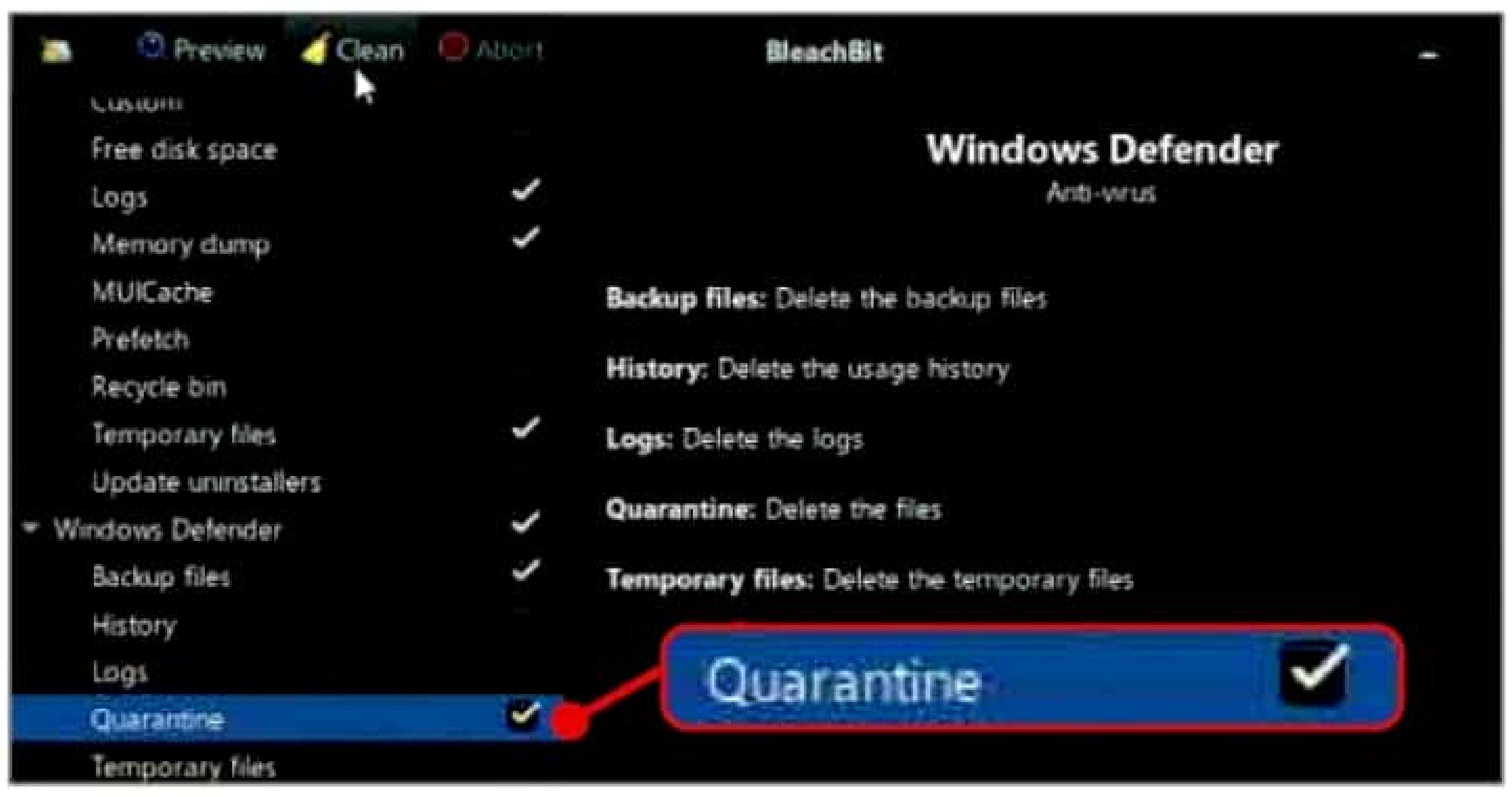
Run the tool, then select the options in the left-hand menus to remove all the leftover data from the various Microsoft tools in one fell swoop. Not only does this reclaim space and tidy up your hard drive, but it also helps protect your privacy from other people who use your computer.

We particularly like the fact that BleachBit deletes malware that's been quarantined by Microsoft Defender. You can do this within Defender itself, but it's much quicker just to tick the Quarantine box in BleachBit (see screenshot left). This saves you having to open Defender separately in order to delete it.


Temp
File
Home
Share
View
Pin to Quick access
Copy
Paste
Cut
Copy path
Paste shortcut
Clipboard
Move to
Copy to
Orga
Delete
Rename
New folder
Properties
Open
Edit
History
Open
Recycle
Permanently delete
Show recycle confirmation
Robert Irvine › AppData › Local ›
Quick access
Desktop
Downloads
Documents
Pictures
Files by Google
INVOICES SENT
Permanently delete

| Name | Date modified | Type |
|---|---|---|
| mat-debug-7612 | 18/01/2021 12:19 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-3132 | 18/01/2021 12:03 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-19 | 1:49 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-4944 | 18/01/2021 11:44 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-7412 | 18/01/2021 11:44 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-18992 | 18/01/2021 11:44 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-15924 | 18/01/2021 11:43 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-10472 | 18/01/2021 11:34 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-8632 | 18/01/2021 11:23 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-19304 | 18/01/2021 11:04 | Text Document |
| mat-debug-3288 | 18/01/2021 10:49 | Text Document |

**Click this option to remove junk files that have been overlooked by cleanup tools**


Preview
Clean
Abort
BleachBit
Custom
Free disk space
Logs
Memory dump
MUICache
Prefetch
Recycle bin
Temporary files
Update uninstallers
Windows Defender
Backup files
History
Logs
Quarantine
Temporary files
Windows Defender
Anti-virus
Quarantine

**Backup files:** Delete the backup files

**History:** Delete the usage history

**Logs:** Delete the logs

**Quarantine:** Delete the files

**Temporary files:** Delete the temporary files

**BleachBit deletes leftover data from Windows tools, including quarantined malware files**

## Clear out your Windows Temp folder

Once you've performed a clear-out using Storage Sense, Disk Cleanup or a third-party cleaning tool like BleachBit, it's worth checking the Windows Temp folder to see if any junk remains there. Open File Explorer (press Windows key+E), press Alt+D to highlight the address bar, then type %localappdata%\temp.

If there are a lot of temporary files in the folder, you should consider deleting any that are dated from over a month ago. Simply select the files, click Delete at the top of the window, followed by 'Permanently delete' (see screenshot above).

And don't worry – Windows won't let you delete files that are being used by a program that you currently have open.

## What you must *never* remove from Windows

There are certain files and folders in Windows that you should never delete, or you'll risk messing up your PC. Here are five items that look like junk, but are essential to Windows running smoothly.

**Pagefile.sys**

When your computer runs low on memory, it switches to what's known as virtual memory – essentially a large temporary file in which your computer stores data. Although it's tempting to delete this multi-gigabyte file, it's best left for Windows to manage.

**System32**

We've seen plenty of conspiracy theories in recent years claiming that viruses reside in the **C:\Windows\System32** folder, with most of them recommending you delete it immediately. As it happens, this folder contains files that are essential to Windows, so we recommend you leave them be.

**WinSxS**

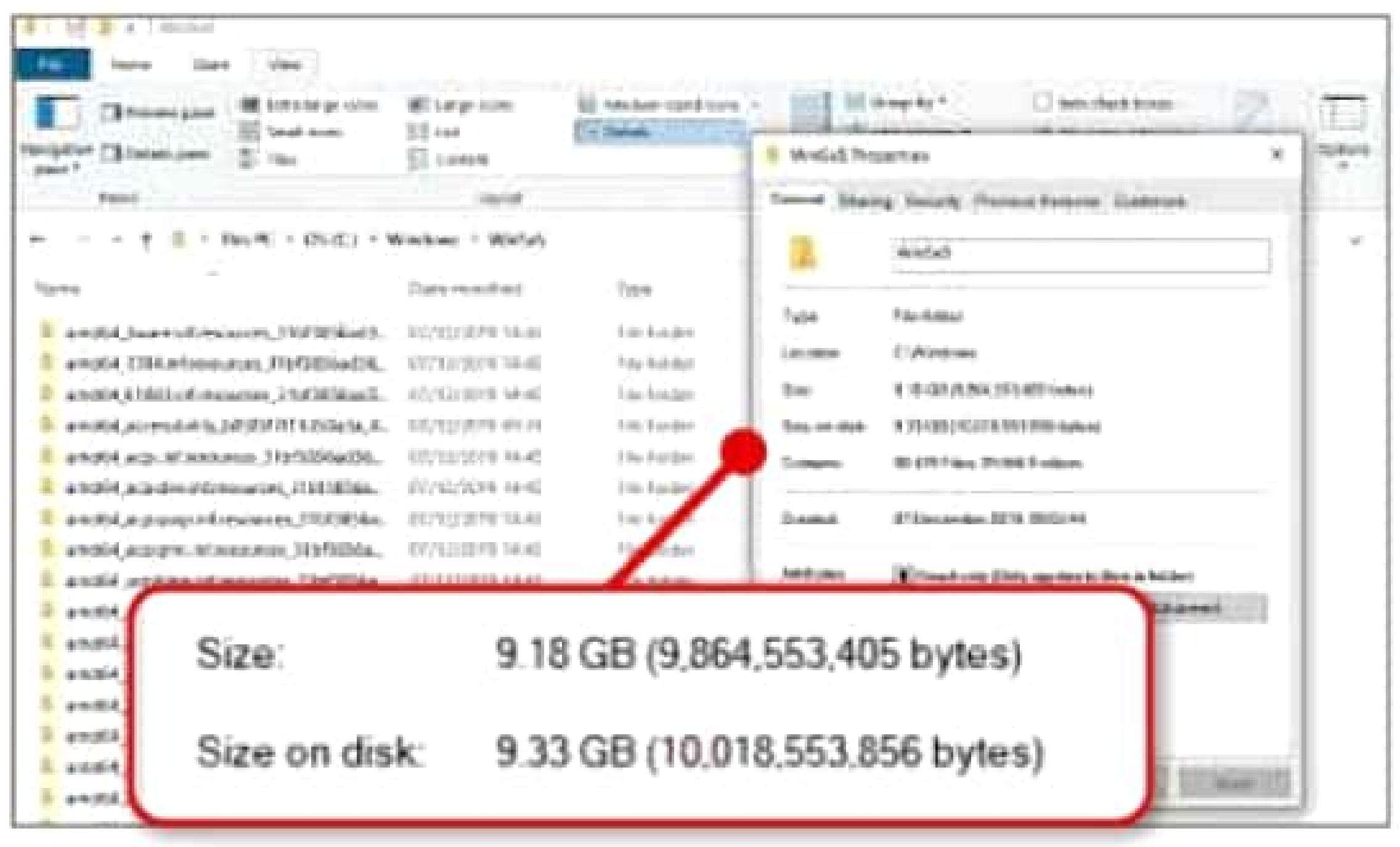
This folder (located in **C:\Windows**) has all the hallmarks of junk – tens of thousands of files, totalling many gigabytes (80,479 files and 9.33GB on our PC – see screenshot). However, it's a vital folder that, among other things, is used to store copies of system files that are being used by programs on your PC.

**Program Files**

If you're running 64bit Windows, you may notice you have two Program Files folders in **C:\Windows**. Don't be fooled into thinking one is a duplicate of the other – the '(x86)' folder actually stores 32bit software.

**Desktop Windows Manager**

You may notice this mysterious background process using memory in Task Manager. It helps create your graphical user interface and therefore shouldn't – in fact *can't* – be removed.



Size: 9.18 GB (9,864,553,405 bytes)

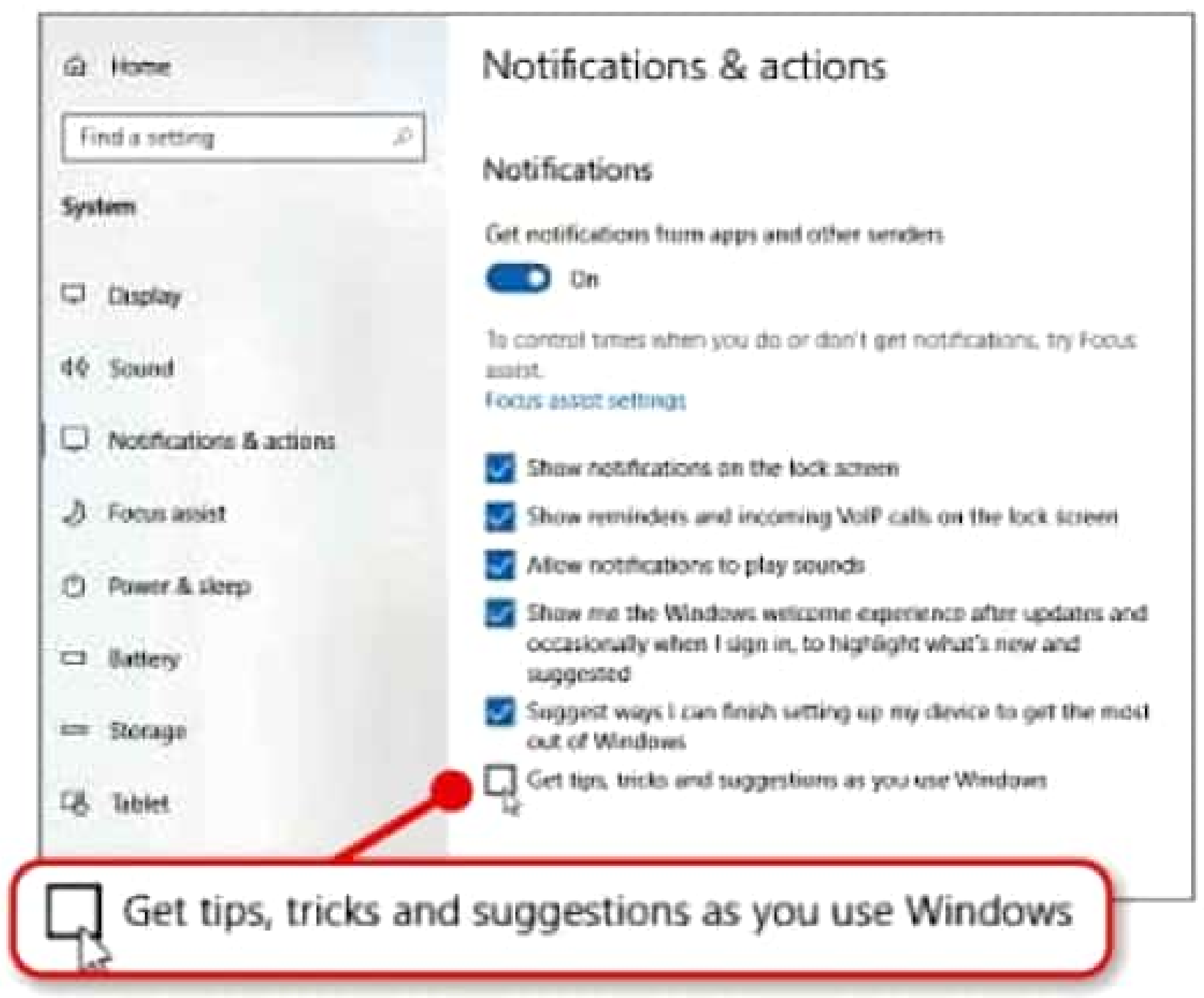
Size on disk: 9.33 GB (10,018,553,856 bytes)

# REMOVE WINDOWS ADVERTS & POP-UPS

## Disable pop-up taskbar ads

One of the biggest annoyances in Windows 10 are the pop-up notifications that appear above the taskbar in the bottom-right corner of your screen. We don't mean the useful alerts that tell you a new device has connected to your PC or that Defender has completed a virus scan. No, we mean those that 'suggest' you use a particular Microsoft product – in other words, adverts. Common examples include ads for Microsoft's Personal Shopping Assistant extension and its Rewards loyalty-point scheme.

It's easy to disable these. Open the Settings app and choose System, then 'Notifications & actions'. Untick the option 'Get tips, tricks and suggestions as you use Windows' (see screenshot below). You can also turn off the tiresome 'Get even more from Windows' screen that appears after you install a Windows update. Just untick the box next to 'Show me the Windows welcome screen after updates'.



Notifications & actions

Notifications

Get notifications from apps and other senders

On

To control times when you do or don't get notifications, try Focus assist.

Focus assist settings

☑ Show notifications on the lock screen

☑ Show reminders and incoming VoIP calls on the lock screen

☑ Allow notifications to play sounds

☑ Show me the Windows welcome experience after updates and occasionally when I sign in, to highlight what's new and suggested

☑ Suggest ways I can finish setting up my device to get the most out of Windows

☐ Get tips, tricks and suggestions as you use Windows

☐ Get tips, tricks and suggestions as you use Windows

Block taskbar ads by unticking this option

## Remove Start menu suggestions

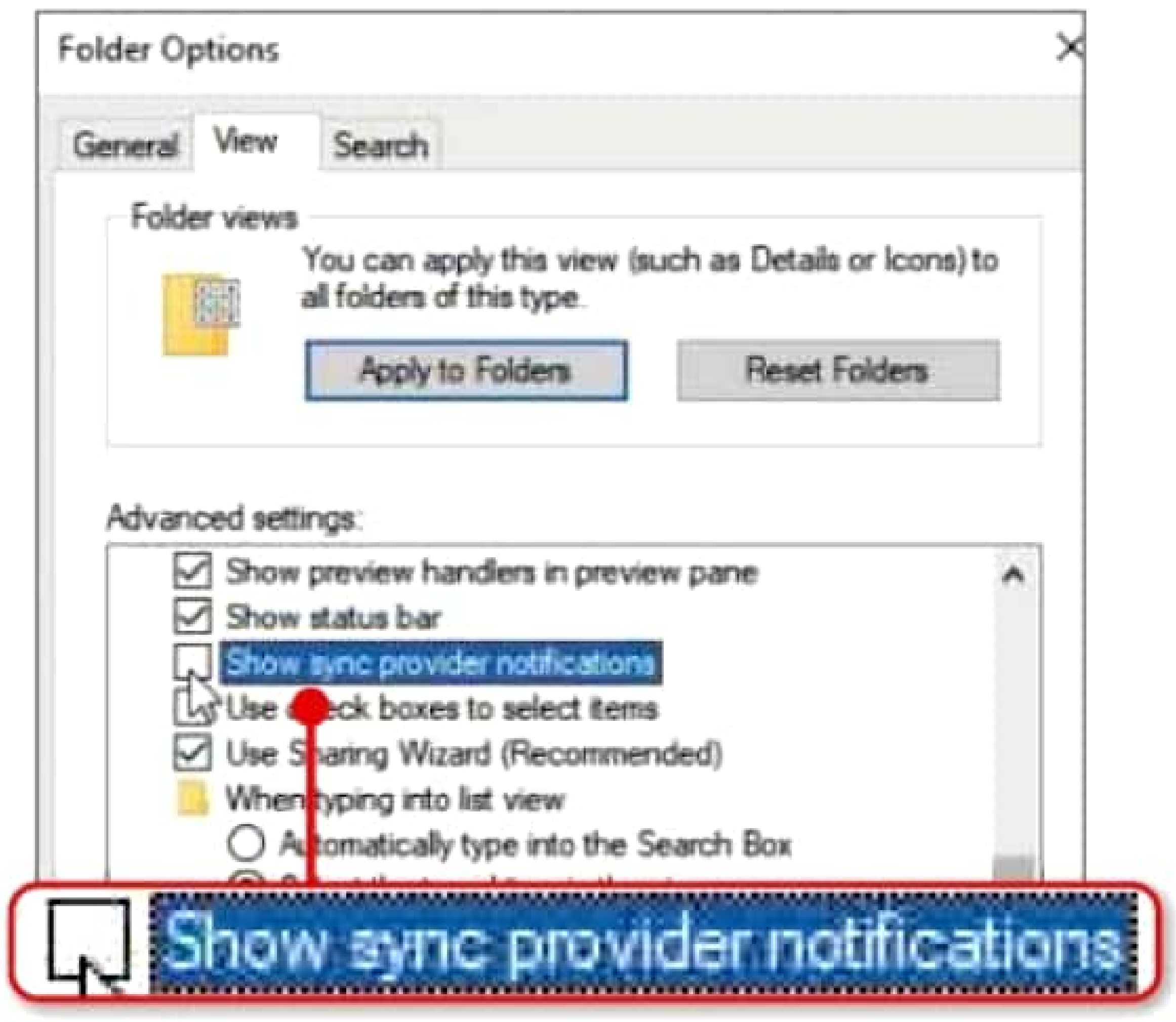
These irritating 'suggestions' also appear in the Windows Start menu, usually below the list of 'Most used' or 'Recently added' tools. These aren't just for Microsoft products, but also for apps in the Microsoft Store, including paid-for games. You can remove these entries by right-clicking the Suggested item and choosing 'Don't show this suggestion' to hide that particular ad.

Better still, make sure you *never* see these entries by going to the Settings app, selecting Personalisation then Start, and switching off the option 'Show suggestions occasionally in Start'.

## Block ads in Windows apps and tools

Ads also appear in many apps and tools built into Windows 10. Examples of these include a 'Get Office 365' message in File Explorer and promotions for the Outlook mobile app in Mail.

To disable adverts in File Explorer, open that tool, click the View tab, then click the Options button on the main toolbar. Select 'Change folder and search options' then click the View tab in the Folder Options box that opens. Scroll down to the option 'Show sync provider notifications', untick it (see screenshot above), then click OK. Suggested apps also appear in the Share panel that opens when you share a file through File Explorer. To remove these, right-click a blank area of the panel and switch off 'Show app suggestions'.



You can apply this view (such as Details or Icons) to all folders of this type.

Advanced settings:

☑ Show preview handlers in preview pane

☑ Show status bar

☐ Show sync provider notifications

☐ Use check boxes to select items

☑ Use Sharing Wizard (Recommended)

When typing into list view

○ Automatically type into the Search Box

☐ Show sync provider notifications

Untick this option to remove Microsoft's adverts from File Explorer

Although Microsoft stopped showing banner ads in the Windows Mail app after a backlash from users (see its apologetic tweet at www.snipca.com/37201), the ads for Outlook can't be permanently blocked. However, you can hide them by right-clicking them, then choosing Dismiss.

## Remove ads from your Lock screen

The Windows 10 Lock screen is an ideal place for Microsoft to display ads, because it appears automatically when your PC is idle and before you log in. Promotions for Windows Store apps, games and Edge often appear here.

To get rid of these, go to Settings, Personalisation, 'Lock screen' and switch the background from 'Windows spotlight' to Picture or Slideshow. Finally, untick the 'Get fun facts, tips and more on your lock screen' option to escape the hard-sell Lock-screen experience. **ca**

## More Windows junk coming soon

Just when you thought you'd rid yourself of all Windows' built-in junk, Microsoft announces another unwanted feature. This one is called 'News and Interests', and will appear as a large pop-up tile above the taskbar in the right-hand corner of your screen.

It provides a personalised and constantly updated feed of news headlines, weather forecasts and online content tailored to your interests, much like the start page in Edge. 'News and Interests' has already been spotted by Windows 10 Insiders, so you can expect it to appear in a future Feature Update. The good news is that it can be turned off by right-clicking the taskbar and unticking the 'News and Interests' option.

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# Should you stop using WhatsApp?

It's easy to use and incredibly popular, but is WhatsApp about to put your privacy at risk? **Will Stapley** explains what's changing and reveals the apps you may want to start using instead

If you've got a smartphone, there's a good chance you've got WhatsApp (www.whatsapp.com) installed on it. Unlike standard texts (SMS), which are sent using your mobile network, WhatsApp messages are sent via the internet and are completely free.

What's more, WhatsApp messages are delivered faster, you can see when people have read them, and you can include audio, photos and video clips. WhatsApp also lets you make voice and video calls – again for free. On the face of it, it seems the perfect way to keep in touch during lockdown and in normal times.

However, WhatsApp's reputation took a big hit last month, after the company sent a message to all users explaining that its privacy policy was changing. It indicated WhatsApp would soon start sharing your data with its parent company, Facebook. It warned that if you wanted to continue using your WhatsApp account, you'd need to agree to the new policy by 8 February.

The whole episode was a PR disaster for WhatsApp. Concerned their private chats might soon be passed on to Facebook, millions of WhatsApp users started moving to different messaging apps (more on these later). In an effort to calm the waters, WhatsApp extended the deadline to 15 May.

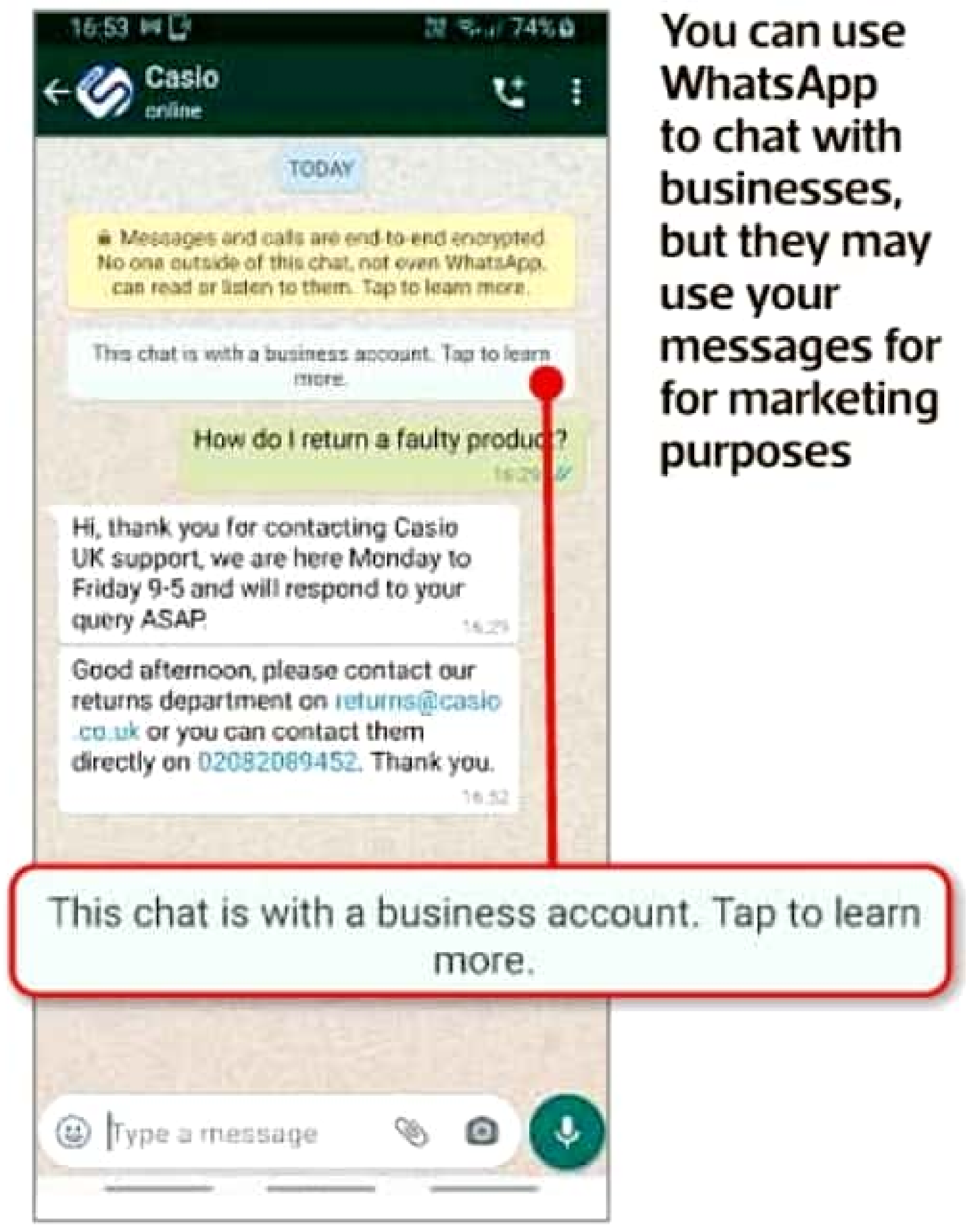
But this is unlikely to ease fears about the future risks to private data. So what's happening? Let us explain.

## Will Facebook be able to read my messages?

Had WhatsApp's wording been clearer, it might have avoided the controversy. The update doesn't in any way compromise the privacy of your WhatsApp chats. WhatsApp uses end-to-end (E2E) encryption, which means your messages can be read only by you and the person (or people, if you use group chats) you're corresponding with. Hackers, marketing companies and even WhatsApp and Facebook have no access to them whatsoever.

## So, what's changing?

For WhatsApp users based in the UK and the EU, the privacy-policy changes are relatively minor and focus on how businesses use the service. Businesses can now integrate WhatsApp chat options into their Facebook pages and choose to store the chats on the site's secure servers, making it easier for them to target you with adverts on Facebook.



Messages and calls are end-to-end encrypted. No one outside of this chat, not even WhatsApp, can read or listen to them. Tap to learn more.

This chat is with a business account. Tap to learn more.

How do I return a faulty product? 16:29

Hi, thank you for contacting Casio UK support, we are here Monday to Friday 9-5 and will respond to your query ASAP. 16:29

Good afternoon, please contact our returns department on returns@casio.co.uk or you can contact them directly on 02082089452. Thank you. 16:52

This chat is with a business account. Tap to learn more.

**You can use WhatsApp to chat with businesses, but they may use your messages for for marketing purposes**

For WhatsApp users not in the UK or EU, the privacy updates go further, adding new ways in which WhatsApp can share information with Facebook, such as how often you use the service and metadata like the make and model of your phone.

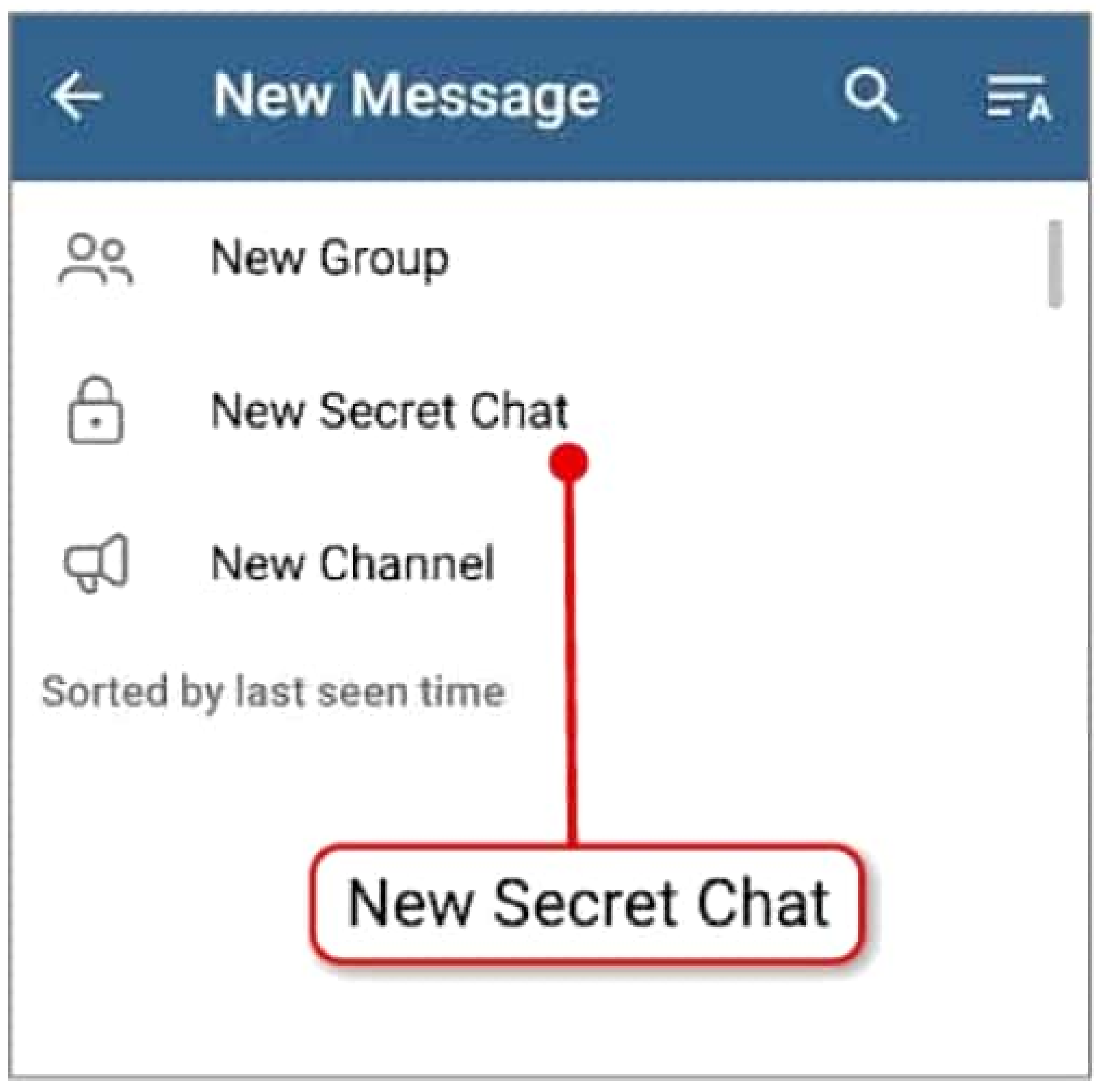
Bear in mind that you should always be careful when using WhatsApp to contact businesses. Although your conversations are protected by E2E encryption, they could still be shared around that company (if that's in line with its privacy policy) and, ultimately, used for marketing purposes. You'll know when you're contacting a business on WhatsApp – just look out for the message toward the top of the chat window (see screenshot left).

## What are the alternatives?

### Telegram

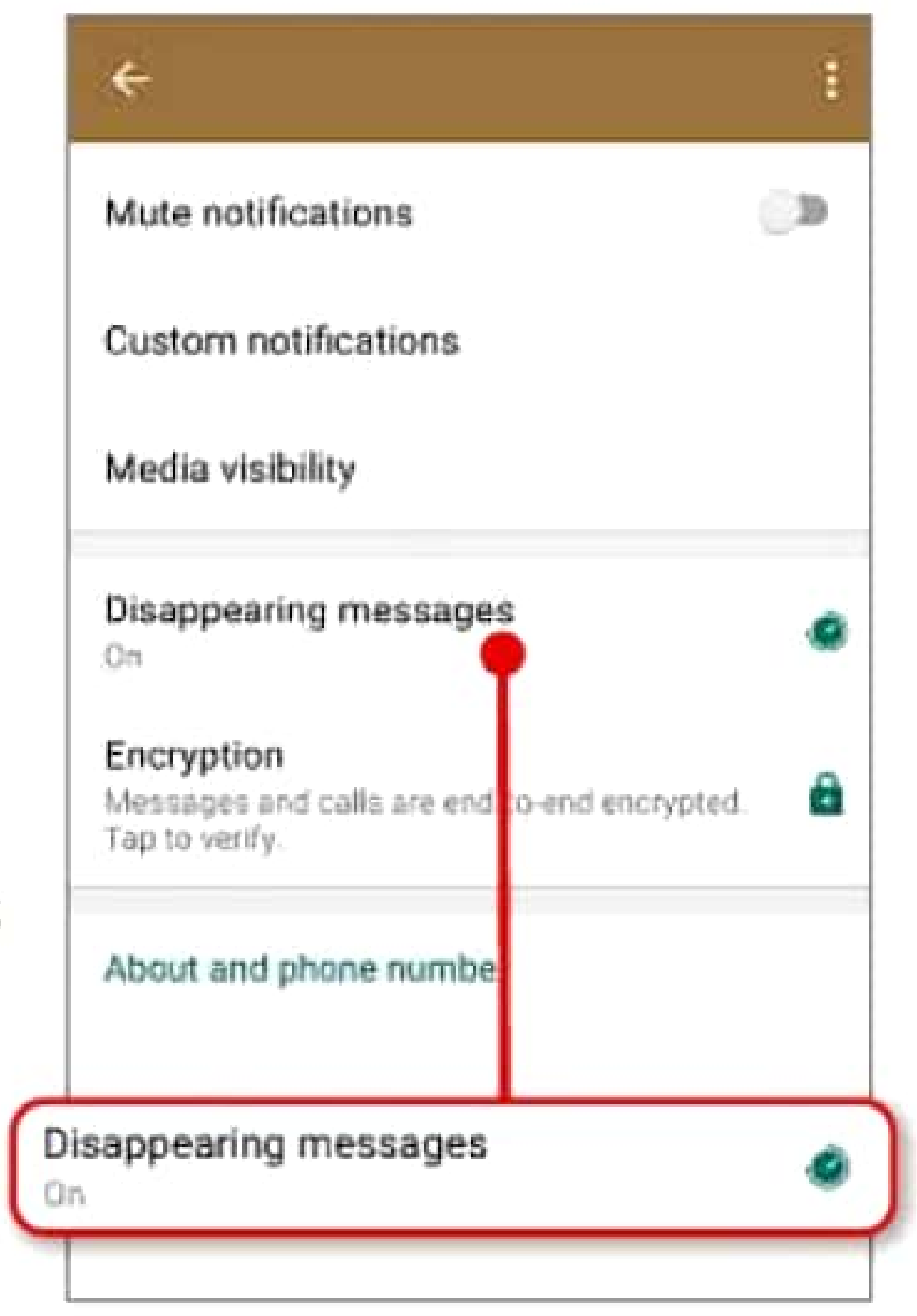
**iOS** www.snipca.com/37175
**Android** www.snipca.com/37176

Telegram stores all your messages on its servers, which means you can access them on any number of devices (PC, tablet, phone and so on). WhatsApp is more restrictive because it stores everything on your phone. You can



**Telegram protects chats using E2E, but only if you start a 'secret chat'**

## Set your messages to self-destruct



Disappearing messages
On

By default, when you send a message to someone on WhatsApp, Telegram or Signal it stays on that person's device until they delete it. If you don't like the idea of personal or sensitive exchanges being in the hands of someone else for a period of time, you can set your messages to self-destruct.

In WhatsApp, open the relevant chat, then tap your contact's name, followed by 'Disappearing messages' (see screenshot). Once this is switched on, your messages will be removed from the chat (on both your phone and the recipient's) after seven days.

It's a similar process in Signal, but you have more control over when messages disappear. Open a chat, tap the contact's name, then 'Disappearing messages' and set the timer to anything between five seconds and one week.

In Telegram, first start a secret chat (as explained below), then tap the menu button, followed by 'Set self-destruct timer' and choose when you want your messages to disappear (again, between one second and one week).

Bear in mind that this setting doesn't destroy any messages already sent. And there's nothing to stop someone making a permanent record of your chat before expiry by taking a screenshot or photo of it, as well as downloading any photos, videos or audio clips you send them.

---

access your WhatsApp account on your PC via its web app (https://web.whatsapp.com), but you first need to pair it with your phone (to sync your messages, the web app also needs your phone to be switched on and connected to the internet).

Another way Telegraph differs from WhatsApp is that it's open source, which means the code that underpins it can be inspected by anyone. While you may not want to analyse the code yourself, the thriving open-source community certainly will. If the app had security flaws or code that allowed Telegram to snoop on your messages, it would soon be discovered.

Standard Telegram chats *aren't* encrypted using E2E. Although we have no reason to think Telegram employees would read them, the lack of this protection means it is at least possible. It also means Telegram *could* target ads at you based on the content of your messages (though it insists it will never do this – see the GDPR section of its FAQ at https://telegram.org/faq). Telegram offers E2E only when you start a separate 'secret chat' session with your contact. You can do this by tapping New Secret Chat from the New Message menu (see screenshot above).

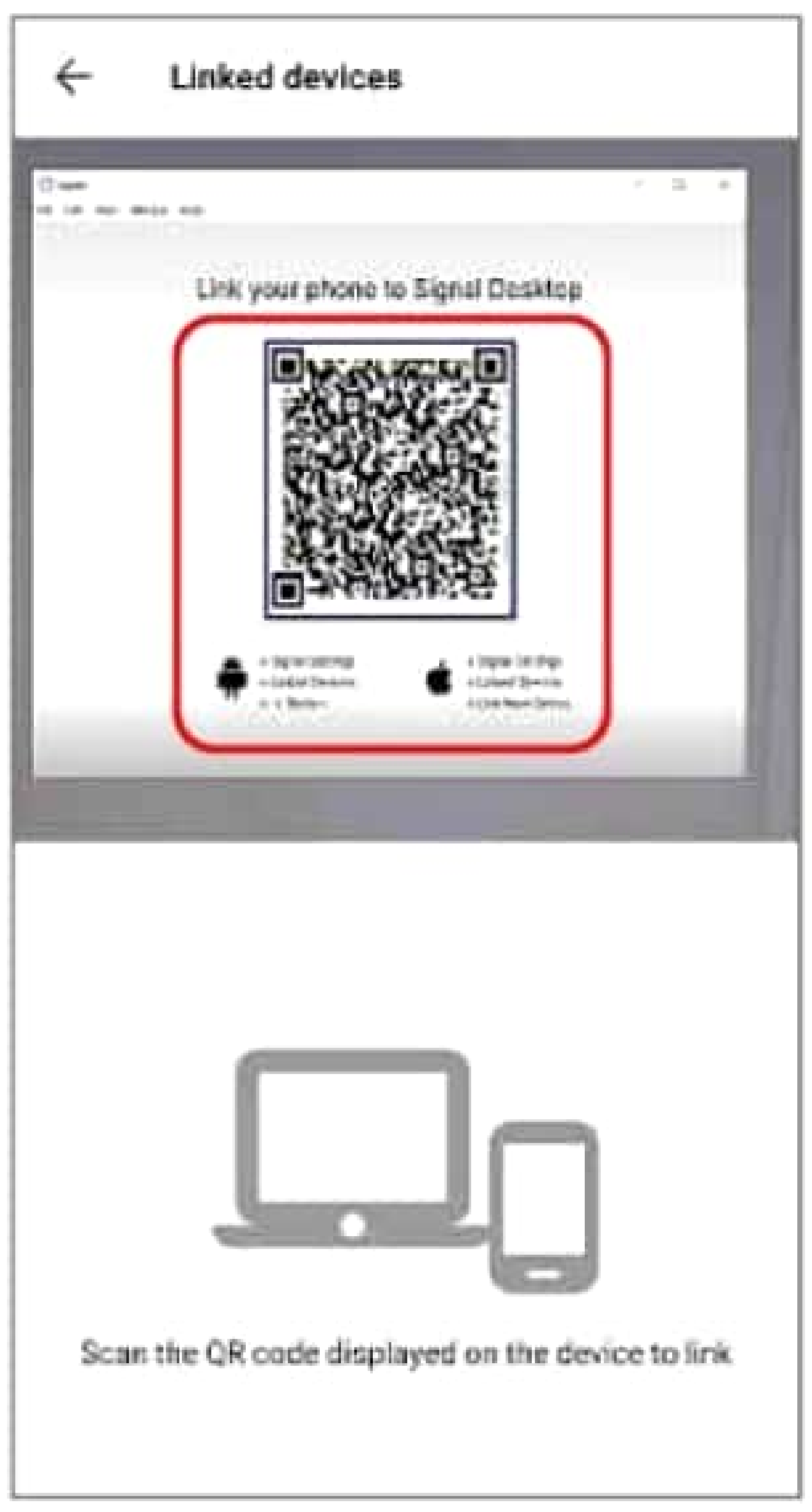
### Signal

**iOS** www.snipca.com/37177
**Android** www.snipca.com/37178

As with WhatsApp, Signal protects all chats (message, voice and video) using E2E encryption. In fact, it was Signal that developed the E2E system that WhatsApp uses. And the similarities don't end there. All Signal messages are stored on your phone and you can access your account on up to two PCs with the Signal web app (www.snipca.com/37182) – as with WhatsApp's web app, you link the app to your phone by scanning a QR code (see screenshot below).

The main difference is that, like Telegram, the Signal code is open source, so you can be confident that the company won't access your data.

Signal has recently experienced a few problems. The recent influx of unhappy WhatsApp users resulted in the service buckling under the pressure and temporarily going offline. Although short-lived, this led to some messages being deleted before they were delivered. Signal was quick to point out that users' privacy and security was at no point compromised (see www.snipca.com/37183).


Linked devices
Link your phone to Signal Desktop
Scan the QR code displayed on the device to link

**Scan a QR code to link your Signal account with the web app and send and receive messages on your PC**

## Should I switch?

Because WhatsApp uses E2E encryption, we're happy to continue using it. However, it's understandable if this PR debacle makes you feel nervous. It's a reminder that WhatsApp is owned by Facebook – whose business model involves gathering as much of your data as possible so it can target you with advertising. If you're serious about privacy, Telegram probably isn't the service for you as it uses E2E only when you use its 'secret chat' tool. Instead, we recommend Signal, which combines the best of WhatsApp and Telegram by being both open source and encrypting all your messages using E2E.

Remember that anyone you want to contact will also have to use WhatsApp, Telegram or Signal. All three import contacts from your phone's address book, so you can see how many are using each service simply by installing its app and checking this list.

WhatsApp currently has over 2 billion users worldwide, many more than Telegram's 500 million and Signal's 20 million. The stark differences in user numbers were borne out when we tested all three on our phone, with 66 of our 79 contacts using WhatsApp, compared with five each for Telegram and Signal. So if you want to switch, you'll have to persuade your friends and family to follow you.

# Your Wi-Fi problems solved

Our recent Cover Feature on getting faster Wi-Fi in 2021 helped many of you, but some readers got in touch needing further advice to fix their wireless woes. **Our Problems Solved team** provides the answers

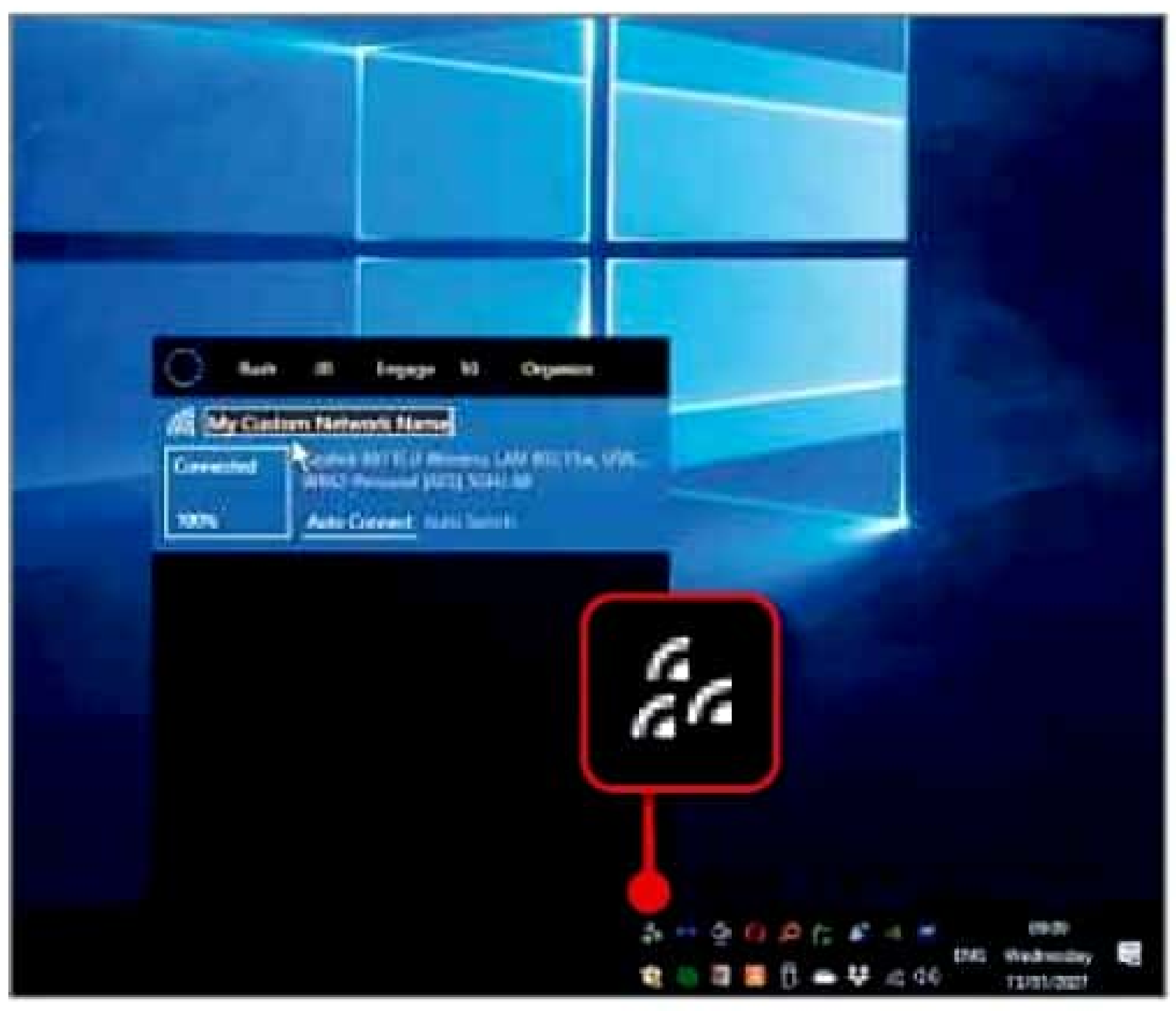
## Why can't I rename my Windows 10 networks?

**Q** I followed Will Stapley's Get Your Fastest Ever Wi-Fi in 2021 Cover Feature (Issue 595, pictured right) and learned quite a bit – so thanks for that. On page 53, Will says that by selecting a Wi-Fi network before clicking Properties it's possible to change the name that Windows 10 displays for that network. However, I can't get this to work. I'd find this facility useful because I'm in an area surrounded by other routers. I know I could change my network's name on my router but then I'd have to reconnect every device in my home. What am I doing wrong?

**Mick Waller**

**A** You're not doing anything wrong – we neglected to mention that you need to use a small tool called Wifinian (a free download from www.snipca.com/37108) to rename Wi-Fi networks.

With this installed, first left-click its icon in the system tray (three little Wi-Fi symbols – see screenshot below left) to show the list of known networks. Next, hover your cursor over the name of a network, then click and hold down the left mouse button for a few seconds. You'll now be able to type a new name.



Click this icon to rename Wi-Fi networks on your PC using Wifinian

Computer act!ve

CONVERT & OPEN YOUR OLD OFFICE FILES

GET YOUR FASTEST EVER WI-FI IN 2021

Make these changes TODAY – for instant results

☑ Routers ☑ Powerlines ☑ Extenders

PLUS BEST NEW SOFTWARE YOU SHOULD'VE INSTALLED IN 2020

**You can read Issue 595's Cover Feature on our 2020 Back Issue CD – available now on Amazon: www.snipca.com/37026**

## Why won't my powerline adapter work?

**Q** Following Will's advice, I tried a powerline arrangement in my garage, just so I can have some Wi-Fi connectivity while I work on my car or DIY. However, it didn't work. When I brought the powerline adapter indoors to try it in an upstairs bedroom, it worked well. A neighbour said this could be because my garage is on a different circuit from the ring main. Could this be the case?

**Mike Goodman**

**A** As Will said in the feature, powerline adapters do have a few downsides. One is that they rely on the electrical wiring in your house. So, while they're ideal for many situations, in others they simply will not work.

We don't know the details of your home's electrics, so we can't offer any easy solutions – but what you were told is indeed a strong possibility. If you don't yourself know about circuitry, we recommend asking an electrician to figure out how your home is wired.

## Are my Ethernet cables slowing my network?

**Q** In your Wi-Fi feature you suggest using an Ethernet cable to connect to the router to test with iPerf (page 51). However, I have Cat 5 and Cat 6 cables, and am under the impression that Cat 6 can handle faster speeds than Cat 5. If I had a really fast broadband connection, would a Cat 5 cable slow the speed down to that cable standard's maximum speed (which I think is 100Mbps)?

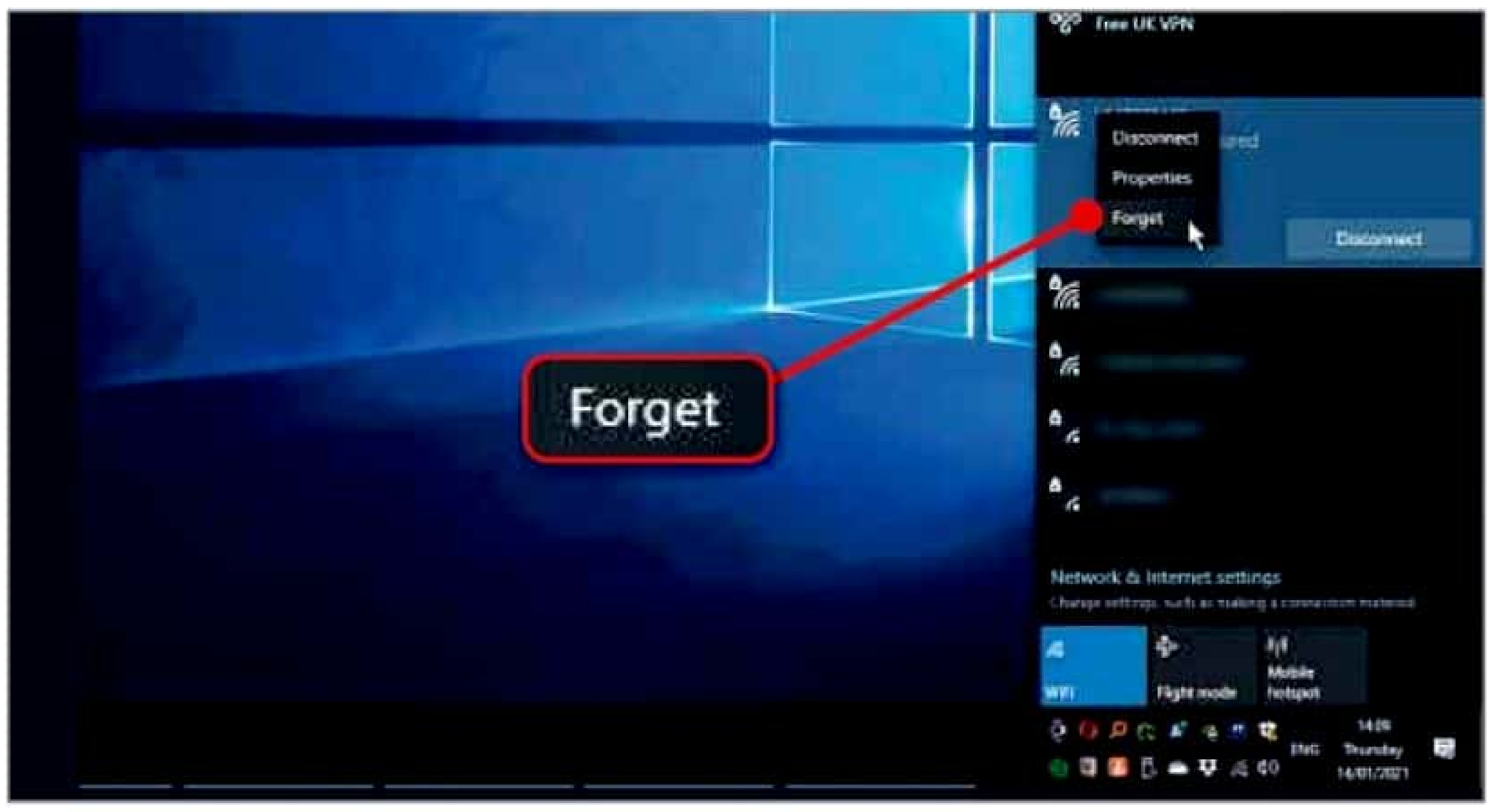
**Fred Miller**

**A** In theory, yes. In practice, probably not much. A Category 5 (Cat 5) cable is rated only for speeds of up to 100Mbps at distances of up to 100m (about 330ft). A Cat 6 cable is designed to handle data rates of up to 10Gbps (10,000Mbps) over the same length.

However, in reality, a good Cat 5 cable can handle speeds of more than

100Mbps. Indeed, over short distances, it can transfer data at up to 1Gbps (1,000Mbps).

Of course, all this is theoretical and much depends on the precise setup and local conditions (such as nearby electrical interference, say). Moreover, the speed will only ever be as fast as your incoming broadband connection. So, while you might have Cat 6 cables that are capable of pushing data at up to 10Gbps, the speed of your broadband service will certainly be much less than this.



You can tell Windows to stop trying to connect to wireless networks you no longer want to use

## Is my dongle deficient?

**Q** I successfully split my BT Smart Hub's 2.4 and 5GHz bands, but the 5GHz band subsequently failed to appear on the list of available Wi-Fi networks. It seems my TP-link TL-WN823N Wi-Fi adapter doesn't support the 5GHz 802.11ac standard. Is that right?

**Peter King**

**A** You are correct that this is the problem here. The TL-WN823N is a basic Wi-Fi dongle that we've recommended a few times over the years, but it supports only the 2.4GHz band and older 802.11a, b and g standards. It doesn't support the newer 5GHz 802.11ac and 802.11ax (Wi-Fi 6) versions.

Technology moves at breakneck speed, so products we recommended a couple of years ago, say, won't necessarily be entirely fit for advice we're publishing today. A couple of years ago, a 5GHz 802.11ac or 802.11ax dongle would have been comparatively expensive, but today, they're easily affordable – the TP-Link AC600 is just £12 (www.snipca.com/37166, pictured below left).

Model: Archer T2U Nano
RoHS
MADE IN CHINA

TP-Link's AC600 USB adapter supports both 2.4GHz and 5GHz bands

## How do I remove a BT hotspot?

**Q** I have a Wi-Fi problem not covered in your feature. I used to be with BT but, having moved home, I'm now with Sky. One of my laptops sometimes tries (and fails) to connect to a nearby Wi-Fi hotspot, rather than my router. How do I stop this?

**Marianne Fletcher**

**A** We imagine that once upon a time you intentionally connected this particular machine to a BT Wi-Fi hotspot, in a coffee shop, say. Your laptop then stored the network name as a connection option. These BT hotspots are named are 'BTWi-fi' or '_BTWi-fi'

We'd guess that there were no BT Wi-Fi hotspots close to your old home, so this laptop had no reason to try to connect to one. But in your new home, it sounds like you have one or more hotspots nearby.

Regardless, the solution is to simply tell Windows 10 to forget the offending network. To do this, first left-click the Wi-Fi icon in the notification area (at the far right of your taskbar). Next, right-click the hotspot's network name, then click Forget (see screenshot above).

## When is wired better than Wi-Fi?

For all Wi-Fi's virtues, there are times when you'd actually be better off not using it. Devices located close to your router (such as your TV and set-top box) are better served by a wired Ethernet connection. Not only will this provide a faster, more stable connection, but it will also prevent those devices using up valuable bandwidth on your wireless network. Most routers have four LAN ports for connecting wired devices. If you run out, you can add more with an inexpensive network switch (such as Netgear's five-port GS305 – £17 from www.snipca.com/37170, pictured).

NETGEAR
GS305
1
2
3
4
5

## Why won't iPerf run?

**Q** Having tried the Workshop on using iPerf (Issue 595, page 52), I was unable to get past typing iperf3 -s. I tried all combinations, including iperf3-s (without a space), but nothing worked. Having had a subscription to *Computeractive* for some years this is the first time I have emailed you with a problem, which must reflect on how good your magazine is!

**Chris Trussler**

**A** Thanks for the compliment. You didn't tell us which error message you were receiving, but we did warn that iPerf is a tricky tool to use. In particular, in order to execute the command you must be in the correct folder (or 'directory', to use older parlance that's perhaps more fitting for Command Prompt navigation). In Step 3 we did explain how to achieve this using the cd command, which is short for 'change directory'. Nonetheless, it can still be hard to get this stuff right if you're unfamiliar with Command Prompt.

With that in mind, you might find it easier to use File Explorer in Windows 10 to first copy iPerf3 into a 'top-level' folder on your drive. So, rather than having iPerf3 stored in, say, **C:\Users\Chris\Downloads\iperf-3.1.3-win64\iperf-3.1.3-win64** – which is the kind of location it will be placed in by default – you could copy the two iPerf program files ('iperf3.exe' and 'cygwin1.dll') into **C:\iPerf3**.

Then, when you're in the Command Prompt window, rather than having the hassle of trying to copy and paste a long folder/directory path – resulting in a command that looks something like cd C:\Users\Chris\Downloads\iperf-3.1.3-win64\iperf-3.1.3-win64 – you can simply type cd \iPerf3 (with a space) and press Enter. When the Command Prompt displays C:\iPerf3> then you're ready to execute the iPerf commands, as per our Workshop.

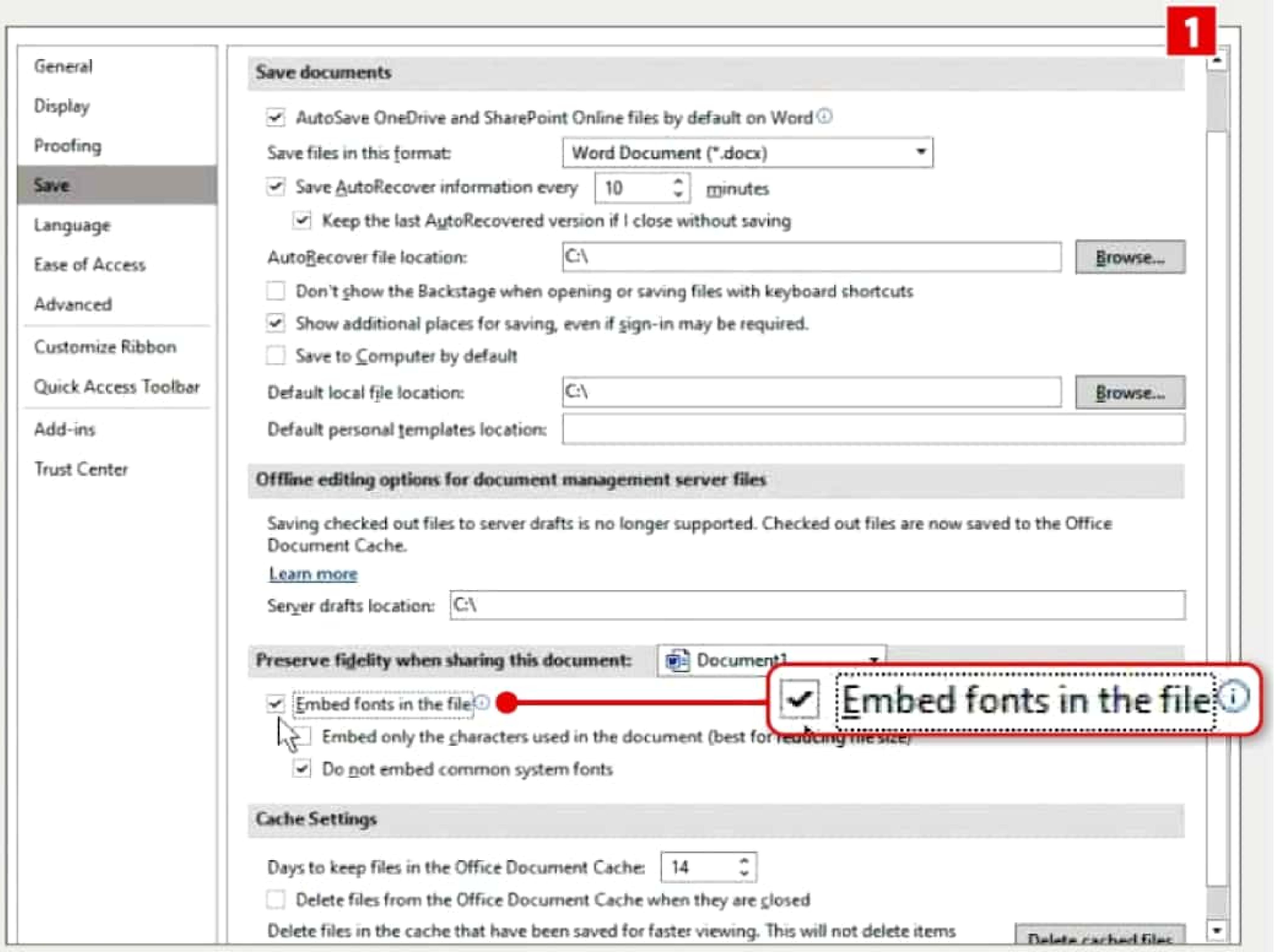
# Problems **Solved**

Our experts solve all your tech problems

## PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

# Why can't I publish my manuscript?

1



**Save documents**

☑ AutoSave OneDrive and SharePoint Online files by default on Word

Save files in this format: Word Document (*.docx)

☑ Save AutoRecover information every 10 minutes

☑ Keep the last AutoRecovered version if I close without saving

AutoRecover file location: C:\

☐ Don't show the Backstage when opening or saving files with keyboard shortcuts

☑ Show additional places for saving, even if sign-in may be required.

☐ Save to Computer by default

Default local file location: C:\

Default personal templates location:

**Offline editing options for document management server files**

Saving checked out files to server drafts is no longer supported. Checked out files are now saved to the Office Document Cache.

Learn more

Server drafts location: C:\

**Preserve fidelity when sharing this document:** Document1

☑ Embed fonts in the file

☐ Embed only the characters used in the document (best for reducing file size)

☑ Do not embed common system fonts

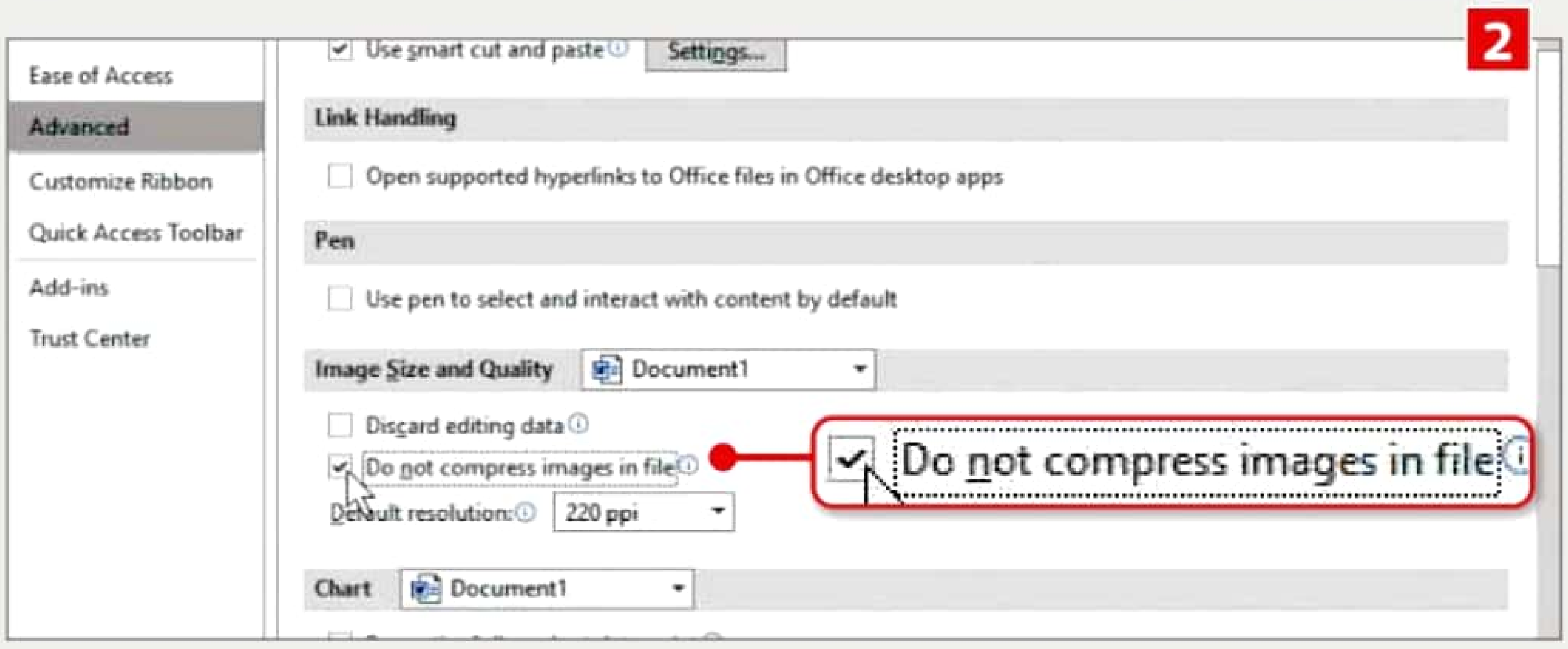
**Cache Settings**

Days to keep files in the Office Document Cache: 14

☐ Delete files from the Office Document Cache when they are closed

Delete files in the cache that have been saved for faster viewing. This will not delete items

2



☑ Use smart cut and paste

**Link Handling**

☐ Open supported hyperlinks to Office files in Office desktop apps

**Pen**

☐ Use pen to select and interact with content by default

**Image Size and Quality** Document1

☐ Discard editing data

☑ Do not compress images in file

Default resolution: 220 ppi

**Chart** Document1

**Click the 'Embed fonts in the file' box (1) to embed fonts in your document. Tick 'Do not compress images in file' to disable image compression (2)**

**Q** I was hoping to upload a manuscript on to self-publishing platform Lulu (www.lulu.com), which I used many years ago. I have used Word 2007 for the project. The problem is that Lulu is asking for 'flattened fonts'. It also tells me that graphics in the Word document were too low a resolution, with Lulu insisting on 300dpi. A friend took the graphics and somehow made them 300dpi but as soon as they were put back in my version of Word they reverted to what they were previously. Is there any way around this issue? I guess that is more than one question!

**Alan Whitby**

**A** We don't place a limit on the number of questions readers can ask, but sadly we only have limited space in which to answer them.

Let's start with 'flattened fonts'. We don't know which particular error message you've encountered in Lulu but it sounds very much like it requires some fonts that you've used to be 'embedded' with your uploaded document.

This means whatever fonts are used in the document must also be saved as *part* of the document, because Lulu is otherwise unable to reproduce them. This will be for copyright reasons. When you supply Lulu with a document that contains embedded fonts, it's merely printing what you've supplied – so it doesn't have to bear the responsibility for adding any missing fonts.

The precise way to do this varies between Word versions but, in the 2007 edition, first click the Office button (top left) followed by Word Options. For the benefit of readers using a more recent edition of Word, first click File followed by Options. Next, in the left-hand navigation pane, click Save and then, in the right-hand pane, scroll down to find the 'Preserve fidelity when sharing this document' heading and, below that, tick the 'Embed fonts in the file' box (see screenshot **1**). Click OK.

The resolution requirement is similarly down to Lulu but is also easily remedied, when you know how. The problem is that, specifically with Word 2007, it defaults to compressing images in a document – and at a resolution of 220dpi. Newer editions of Word allow this default to be set above 300dpi, which would solve your problem. However, as you have Word 2007, this is obviously not an option for you. The solution, then, is to disable all compression – which will force Word to save the images at whatever resolution your friend has made them.

Again, start by clicking the Office button followed by Word Options (or, in recent Word editions, File then Options). Next, in the left-hand pane, click Advanced and then, in the right-hand pane, scroll down to the 'Image Size and Quality' section and click to tick 'Do not compress images in file' **2**. Finish by clicking OK.

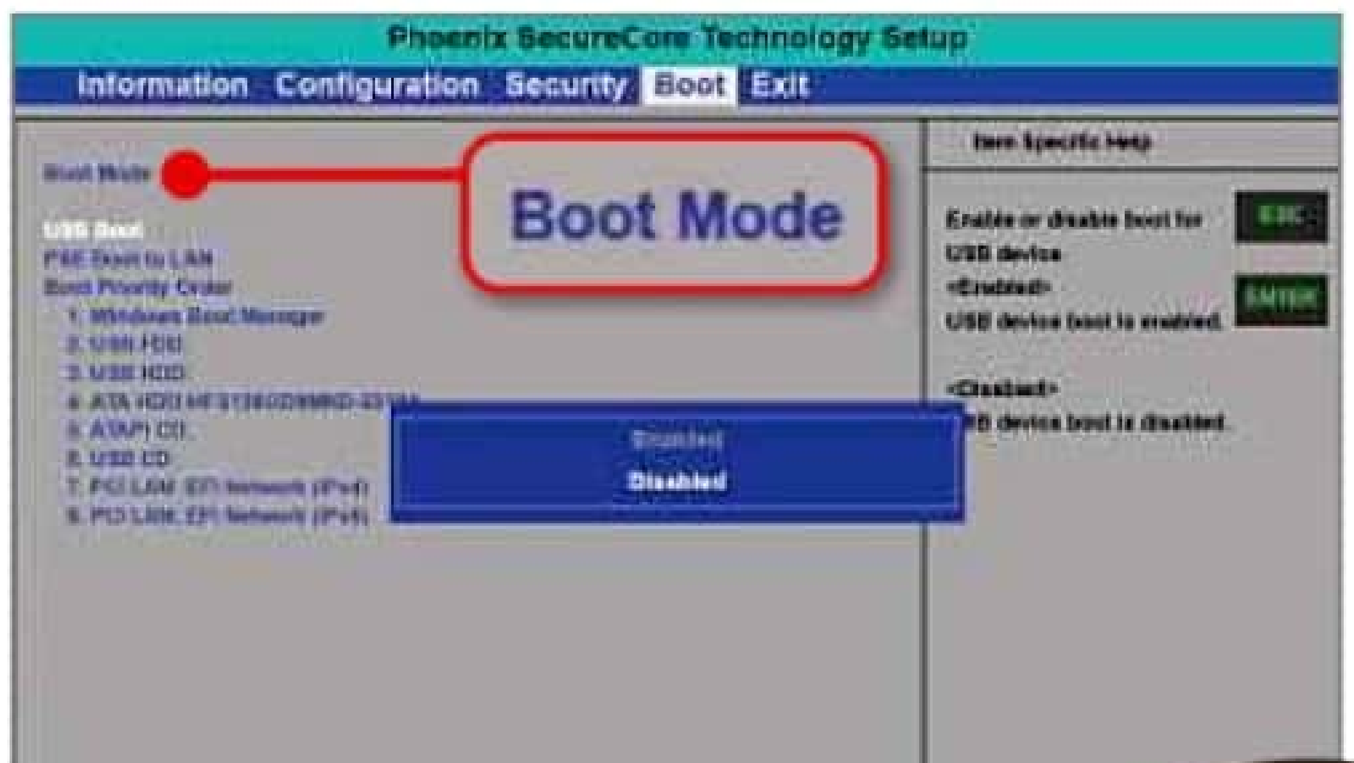
# Why won't my old Windows XP PC boot?

**Q** When Microsoft stopped supporting Windows XP I bought a new PC, but kept my old XP PC for basic photo editing and printing. Recently, though, when I switch on I see only a black screen with text. I've tried to get into Safe Mode but I can't. I can get to the BIOS screen, but it's no help. The second line of displayed text suggests the hard drive is disabled – could this be the cause of my problem?

**Jeff Birkenshaw**

**A** It could, and probably is.

The first line of the text in the photo you sent suggests you also have an external drive attached to your PC. We don't know if that's always been the case but it looks like the computer is trying to boot (start) from that drive. Detaching the external drive might therefore fix the problem.



Panasonic
CR2032
3 V
Made in Indonesia

Change the Boot, or start-up, order (above). A CR2032 battery (right)

However, if the external drive has always been attached then it could be that your motherboard's BIOS backup battery has died. This would be entirely expected, given the likely age of a Windows XP PC. In that case, rather than remembering the drives and desired boot order, when you switch the computer on it defaults to trying to boot from the external drive because that's the first one it detects.

We know nothing about your PC's hardware but, as you've said you've found your way to the BIOS screen, look for a page headed Boot Order, or similar (see screenshot left). Now use the cursor (arrow) keys and Enter to change the boot order, ensuring that the hard drive is at the top of the list. Alternatively, or as well, disabling the USB Boot option, if present, will stop the PC from looking at the external drive during boot.

If our theory is right and this works then you might want to replace the motherboard's battery. These are almost always CR2032 cells (about £4 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37054, pictured above), and are usually easy to fit: just use a flat-edged screwdriver to pop out the old one and then slot the new one in place. Then, you can set the boot order in the BIOS to always boot from the internal hard drive but still keep the external drive attached. That information will be safely stored between sessions.

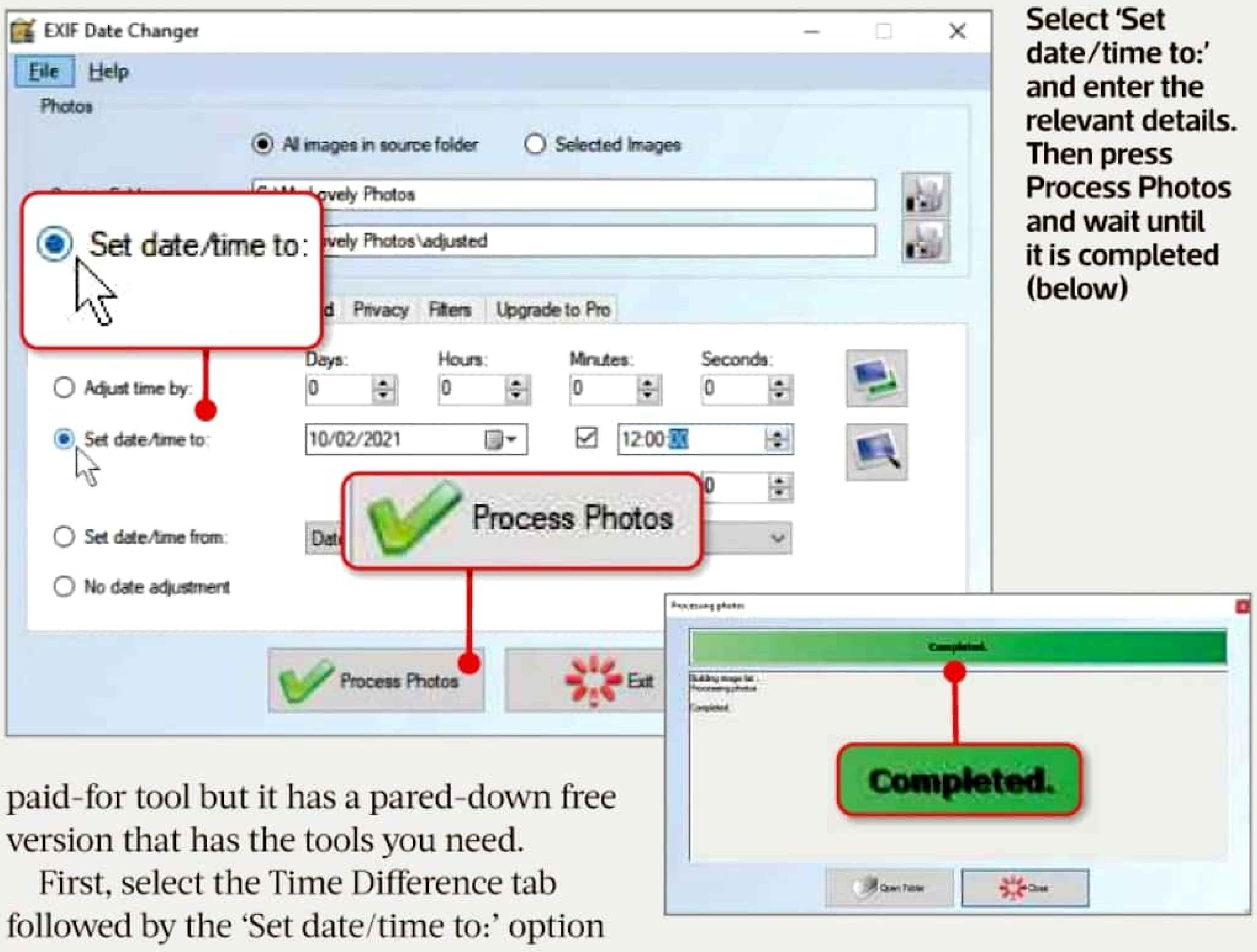
# Can I change my photo dates in Windows 10?

**Q** All my photographs show the date taken as 'modified', and because the creation date is the date I transferred all my files to a new Windows 10 computer, this makes finding specific pictures difficult. All files after the new computer was installed are correctly dated. I have loads of photos so changing them individually would be very time consuming. Is there a way of doing this for the whole Pictures folder in one go?

**John Powell**

**A** We're not entirely sure which tool you're using to view the photos, but the Windows 10 Photos app seems a fair assumption. This displays a 'Date taken' label that can actually draw its information from one of various metadata fields, so it's not always entirely straightforward to fix this problem.

However, there are tools that can help – such as the EXIF Date Changer (www.snipca.com/37055). This is a paid-for tool but it has a pared-down free version that has the tools you need.



● All images in source folder ○ Selected Images

...ovely Photos

...vely Photos\adjusted

○ Adjust time by: Days: 0 Hours: 0 Minutes: 0 Seconds: 0

● Set date/time to: 10/02/2021 ☑ 12:00

○ Set date/time from:

○ No date adjustment

Select 'Set date/time to:' and enter the relevant details. Then press Process Photos and wait until it is completed (below)

First, select the Time Difference tab followed by the 'Set date/time to:' option (see screenshot above), and then use the adjacent fields to enter the date and time. Next, select the Options tab and, there, remove the tick from 'Use the file created date if no date taken' box and then tick the 'Set file created date to take date'. Finally, click the Process Photos button and then just sit back and wait.

## Is the Honey extension safe?

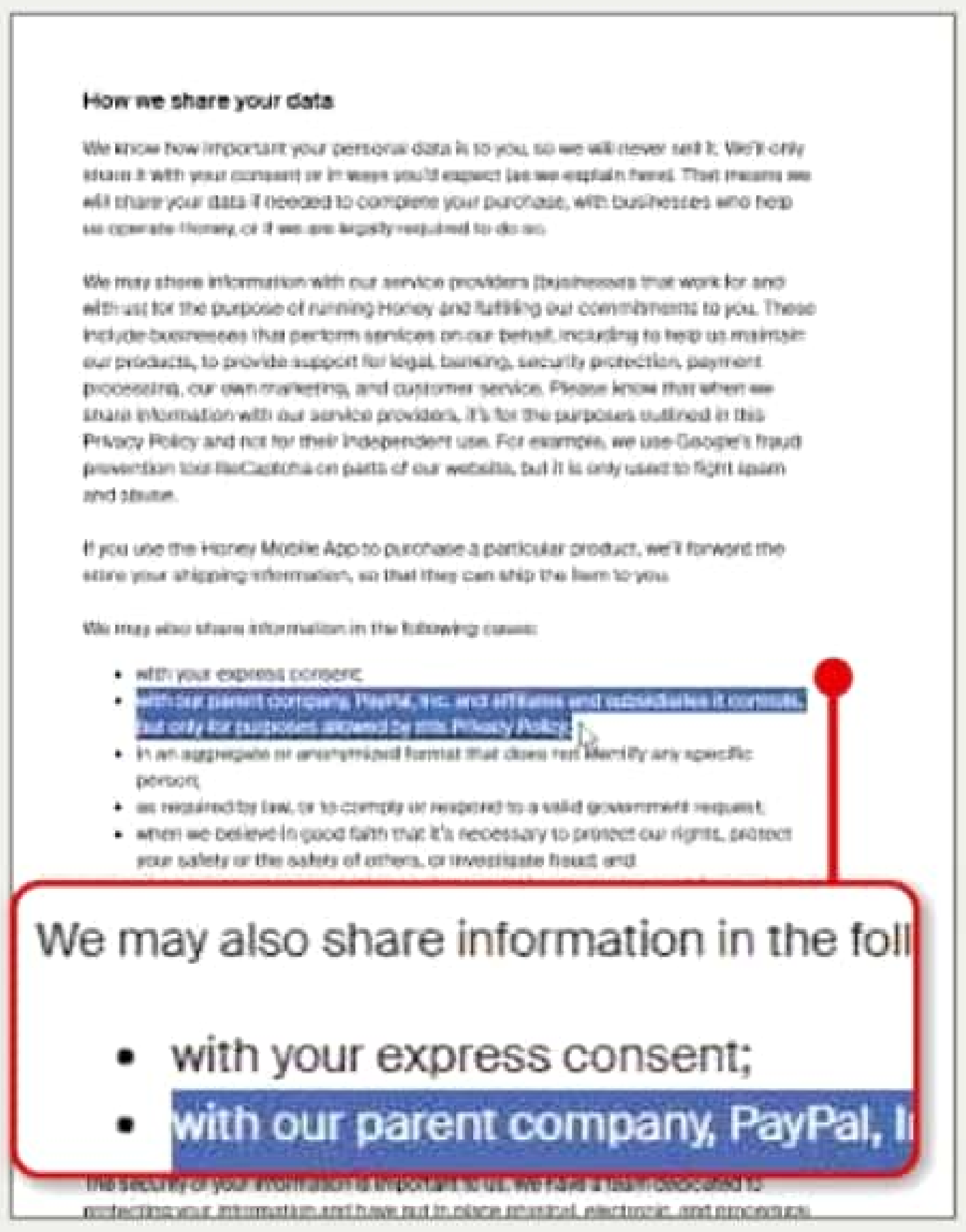
**Q** I've been using the online-voucher extension Honey (www.joinhoney.com) in my Edge browser. On the occasions it found a voucher it saved me worthwhile sums. However, it occurs to me that whoever operates it must be looking at everything I browse. Do you know what they are doing with the information? Am I safe using this product?

**Tim Boddington**

**A** We suppose it depends what you mean by safe.

Honey is a very popular browser extension that, while you might not realise it, is owned by PayPal. As such, it is now without doubt operated by a large, legitimate business. There is certainly no risk to your computer in using the Honey extension in Edge.

But whether what Honey – the company – does with your personal information is 'safe' is more subjective. The full terms are detailed at www.joinhoney.com/privacy but the bottom line is that, yes, by using Honey you are in effect agreeing to some of your information and browsing habits being shared with PayPal and its subsidiaries. Whether or not you're comfortable with that fact is up to you.



How we share your data

We know how important your personal data is to you, so we will never sell it. We'll only share it with your consent or in ways you'd expect (as we explain here). That means we will share your data if needed to complete your purchase, with businesses who help us operate Honey, or if we are legally required to do so.

We may share information with our service providers (businesses that work for and with us for the purpose of running Honey and fulfilling our commitments to you. These include businesses that perform services on our behalf, including to help us maintain our products, to provide support for legal, banking, security protection, payment processing, our own marketing, and customer service. Please know that when we share information with our service providers, it's for the purposes outlined in this Privacy Policy and not for their independent use. For example, we use Google's fraud prevention tool ReCaptcha on parts of our website, but it is only used to fight spam and abuse.

If you use the Honey Mobile App to purchase a particular product, we'll forward the store your shipping information, so that they can ship the item to you.

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- in an aggregate or anonymized format that does not identify any specific person;
- as required by law, or to comply or respond to a valid government request;
- when we believe in good faith that it's necessary to protect our rights, protect your safety or the safety of others, or investigate fraud and

We may also share information in the foll

- with your express consent;
- with our parent company, PayPal, I

The security of your information is important to us. We have a team dedicated to protecting your information and have put in place physical, electronic, and procedural

Honey explains on its website how it may share your data

## Why does Chrome launch Windows Photos?

**Q** When I download images using Chrome it automatically opens them in the Windows 10 Photos app. However, if I use Firefox to download the exact same photo from the exact same website this doesn't happen. I'm sure it never used to happen in Chrome, either. I find this behaviour annoying, and I prefer Chrome over Firefox so I don't want to have to use the latter to download an image. Do you know why this is happening and, more importantly, is there a way to stop it?

**Geoff Cooke**

**A** What's happened is that somewhere along the line you've inadvertently selected an option that tells Chrome to do this. That might sound unlikely but it's surprisingly easy to do by accident.

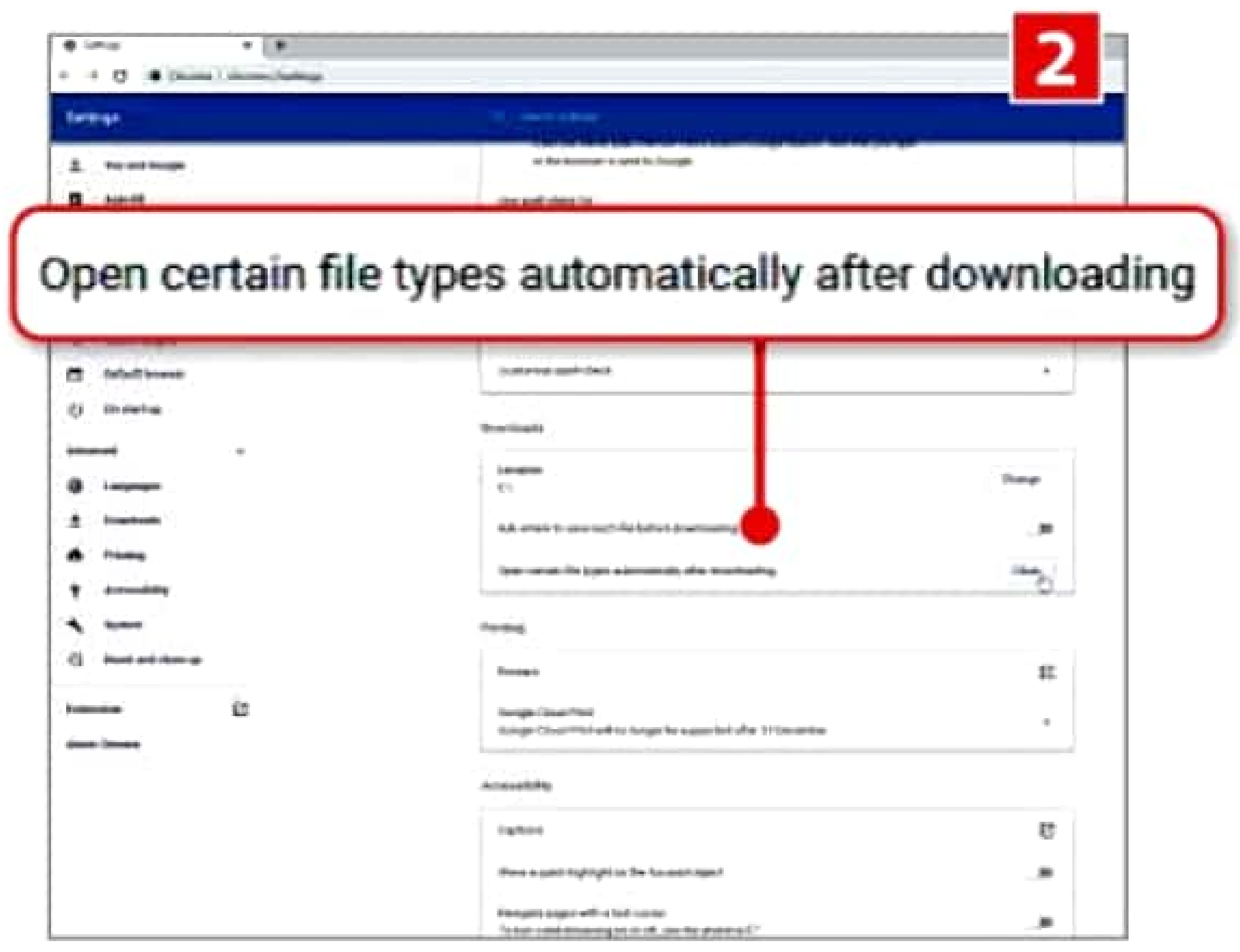
When you download a file in Chrome, an icon for it will appear on a bar at the bottom of the browser. If you click this icon then the file will duly open in whatever is the default program for that file type.

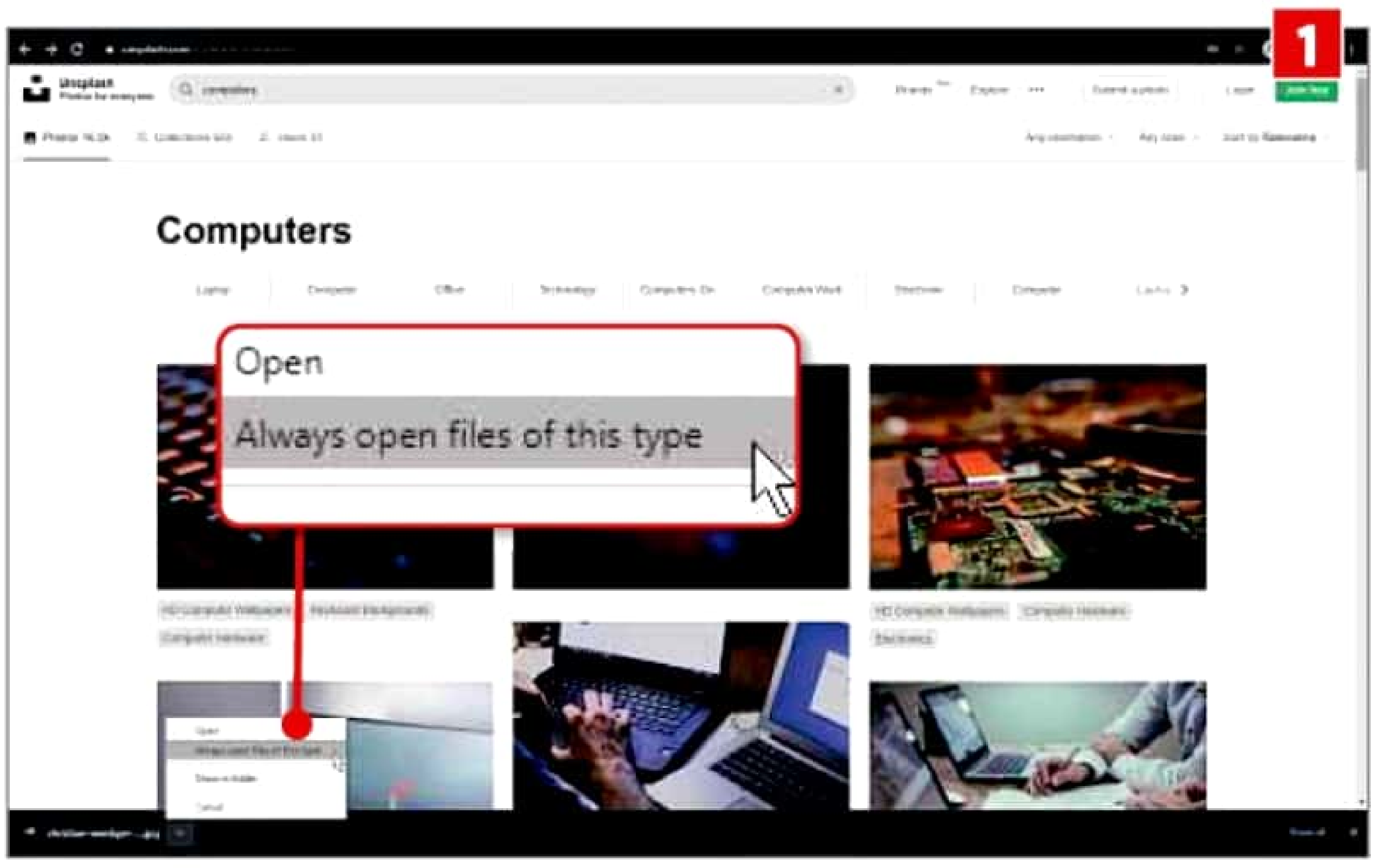
However, notice that the download icon also has a little up-pointing arrow. If you're in the habit of clicking this to choose Open (or 'Show in folder') then it takes just a momentary slip of the finger to click instead the 'Always open files of this type' (see screenshot **1**).

That's almost certainly what's led you to this point. Fortunately it's easy to fix, if you know where to look.

First, open Chrome's menu (by clicking the three vertical dots, top right) and choose Settings. Next, in the right-hand pane, scroll down to find and then click Advanced.

Finally, again on the right, scroll down to the Downloads heading and, below that, click the Clear button alongside the 'Open certain file types automatically after downloading' **2**.





It's easy to accidentally select 'Always open files of this type' (1). Reverse this in Chrome's Settings by selecting the 'Clear' button alongside 'Open certain file types...' (2)

**Q: How do I securely wipe my old drives?**

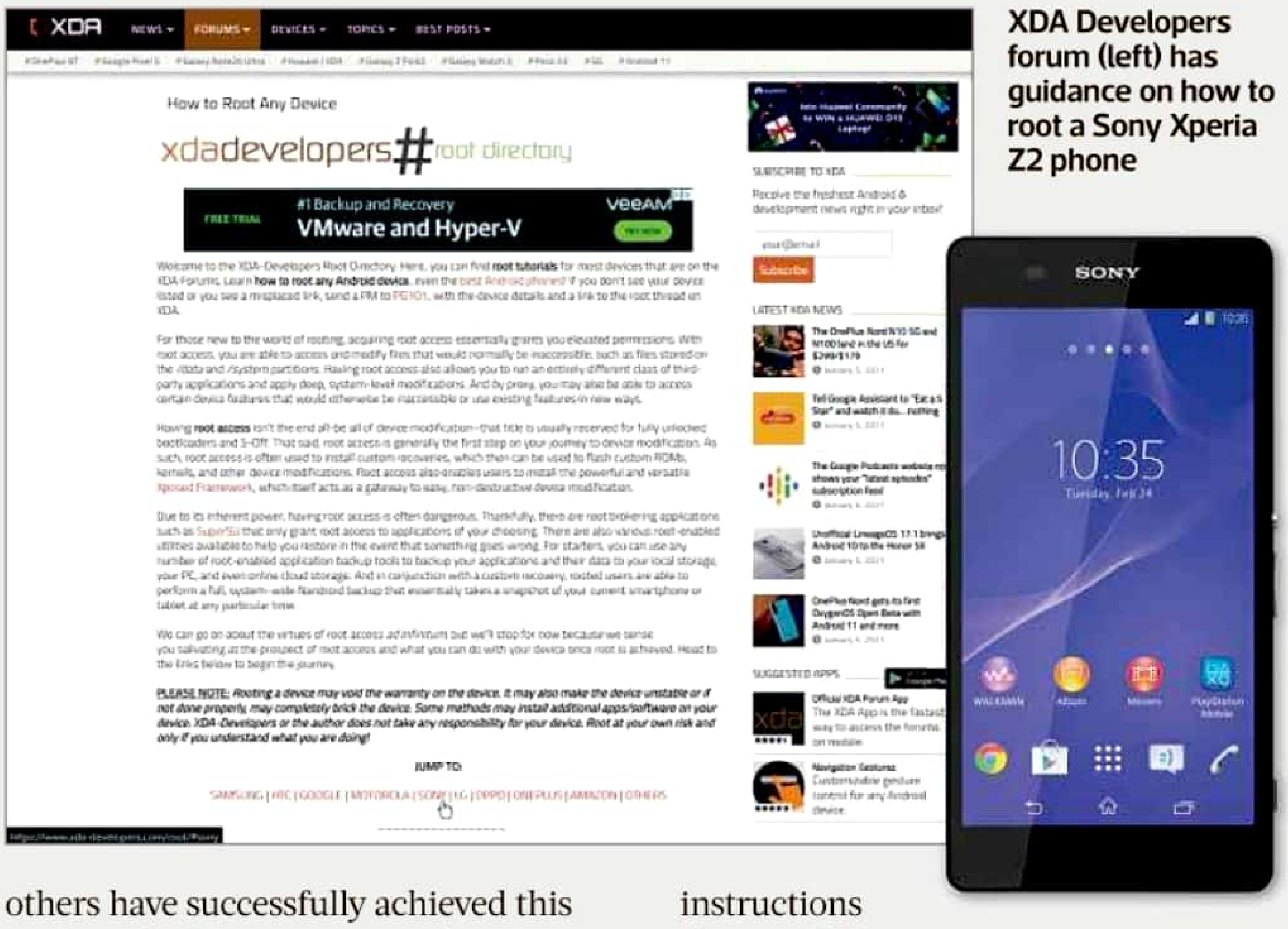
**A: Issue 591, page 64 – find it on our 2020 Back Issue CD**

**Buy it from www.snipca.com/37026**

# Should I root my old Android phone?

**Q** You've previously warned that Android is updated only for a short time and then becomes progressively unsafe to use for banking and similar applications. I have a Sony Xperia Z2, which does everything I want, but is stuck on Android 6.0.1, and its last security update was in 2016. I want to put the banking app Revolut on to it. I see procedures on the internet to 'root' Android phones, and to install Android 10 and an antivirus tool. Is that a good idea? Buying a new Android phone every other year creates unnecessary waste.

**Nick Clatworthy**



XDA Developers forum (left) has guidance on how to root a Sony Xperia Z2 phone

**A** Rooting any Android device is not without risk, but then nor is continuing to use ageing, unsupported versions of Android. Equally, some apps – and in particular banking ones – simply won't work on older versions of the operating system, so risk is mitigated in that way.

We can't tell you whether rooting your Z2 is right for you, but certainly others have successfully achieved this and installed later versions of Android. The main risk is in the process failing somewhere, resulting in a 'bricked' handset. However, as long as you follow the latest procedures, it's generally straightforward and safe. As the precise instructions change all the time, we'd suggest visiting the XDA Developers forum (at www.snipca.com/37056), and find the latest guide for your phone by clicking Sony followed by Xperia Z2.

# Why is my laptop Wi-Fi lagging?

**Q** I have a laptop and a brand-new iPad, and the www.speedtest.net website shows that I get download speeds of about 90Mbps, which seems about right from my Virgin Media router (I pay for a 100Mbps connection). However, my laptop, which is several years old now but running Windows 10, tops out at about 30Mbps. I should say that this disparity remains even if I use both devices right next to the router, so I don't think interference could be the problem. Any idea why my laptop lags behind the iPad's speed so much?

**Ernest Walker**

wifi AC
Foktech

A Foktech Wi-Fi 5 dongle will boost the Wi-Fi speed of an ageing laptop

**A** Yes, in a word – age. We don't know anything about your laptop, but it almost certainly has an older variant of the Wi-Fi standard. The most recent, now dubbed Wi-Fi 6, is 802.11ax, but recent iPads are equipped with 802.11ac (retrospectively renamed Wi-Fi 5). Your laptop might have 802.11n (Wi-Fi 4) or something older still.

The specific technical differences don't really matter here, as in this context older basically means slower. Your new iPad's modern Wi-Fi equipment can keep up with your 100Mbps broadband, but your laptop's can't.

There is a simple solution – and that's to buy a faster Wi-Fi dongle. This will slot into any spare USB slot and bring your laptop's connection up to speed. As you have a 100Mbps connection, then a Wi-Fi 5 dongle, like the pictured Foktech model (around £15, www.snipca.com/37045), will more than suffice.

# Problems Solved

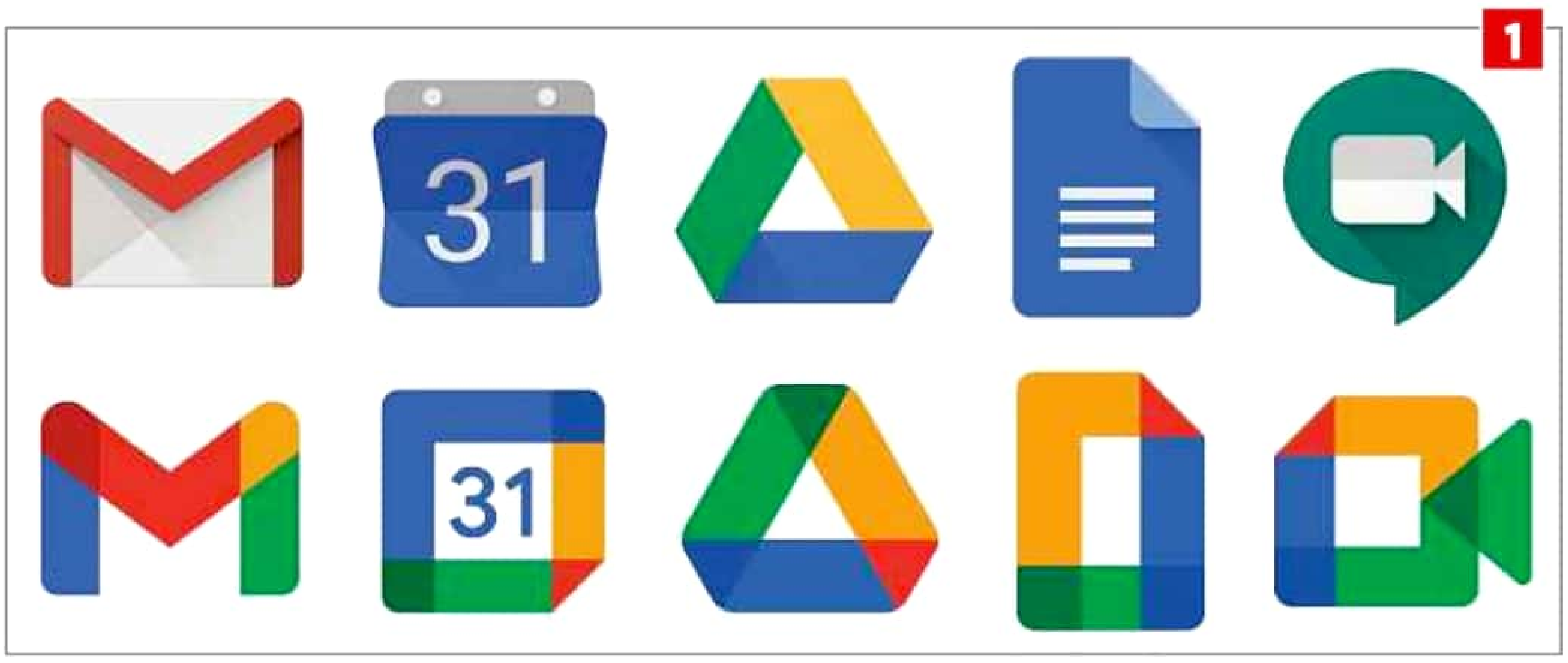
## How do I get my old Gmail icon back?

**Q** I've been using Gmail for email in my Chrome browser for about 10 years. Recently, I noticed that the little 'M' icon that appears in the tab I use for Gmail has changed to some multicoloured monstrosity that I find far less clear than the old image. I assume Google has made this change, because the same psychedelic 'M' also appears in the Gmail windows itself. Is there any way to change it back to how it was?

**Irene Clements**

**A** Yes, this is indeed down to Google. Late last year the company introduced Google Workspace, a new name for its retired G Suite collection of online apps, which include Gmail, Calendar, Drive, Docs and a few others.

At the same time, it 'refreshed' all the app icons to give them Google's signature

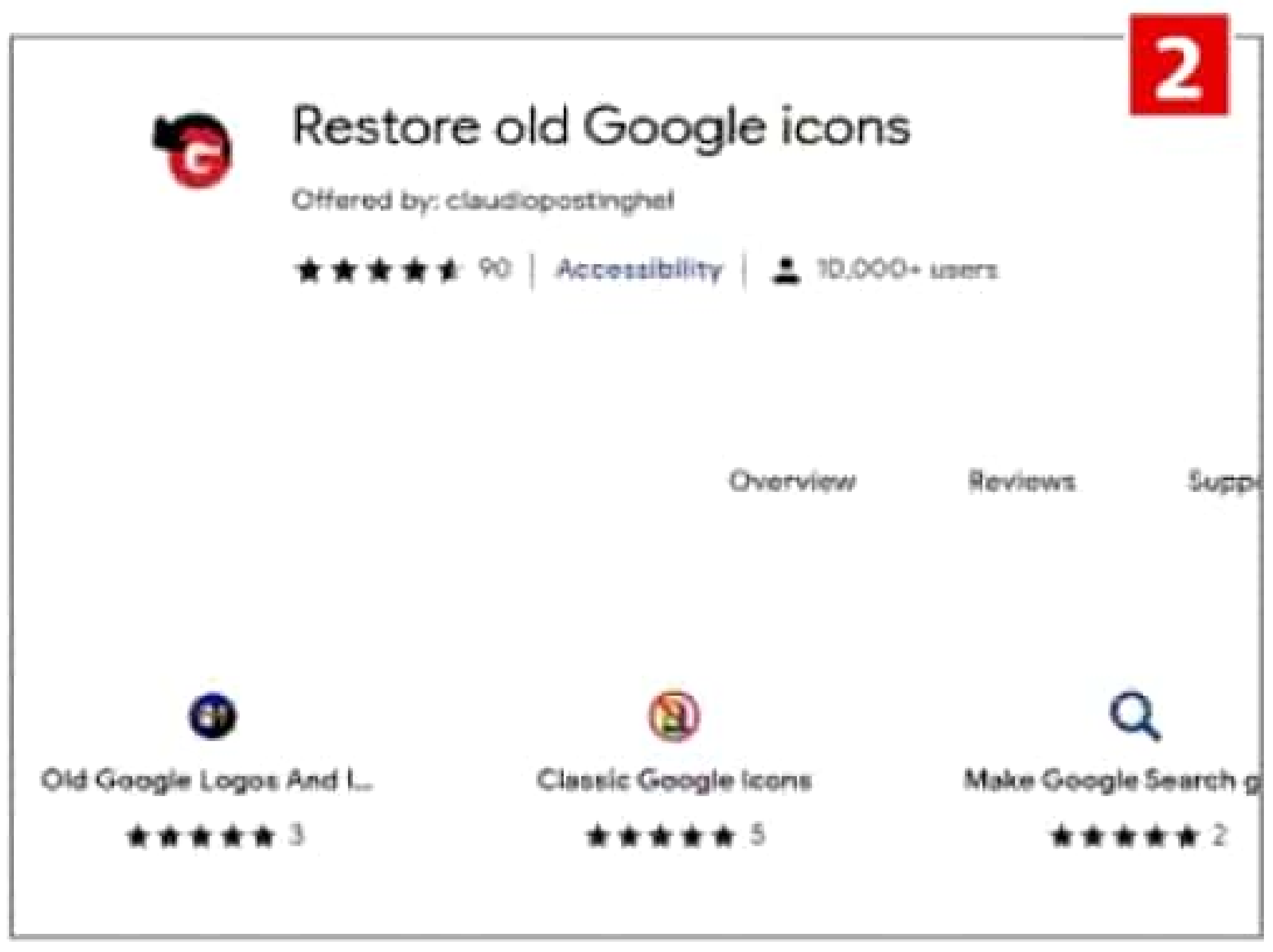


**The bottom line shows the rebranded Google icons (1). You can revert to the old ones (top line) with 'Restore old Google icons' (2)**

four-colour style (see screenshot 1).

Enlarged, they don't look too bad but when small, as in a web tab favicon, you're far from alone in finding them hard to decipher: plenty of us at our *Computeractive* virtual offices find it hard to tell one from the other.

Google has gone all-in on this branding update, so we doubt it'll reverse the look any time soon. In the meantime, a simple fix for the favicons is to install the free 'Restore old Google icons' extension 2,



Restore old Google icons
Offered by: claudiopostinghel
★★★★★ 90 | Accessibility | 10,000+ users

Overview Reviews Supp

Old Google Logos And I... ★★★★★ 3
Classic Google Icons ★★★★★ 5
Make Google Search g ★★★★★ 2

from www.snipca.com/37049. It does exactly what it promises and, once added to Chrome, all that's required is a quick restart of the browser.

## Can I recover files deleted from the Recycle Bin?

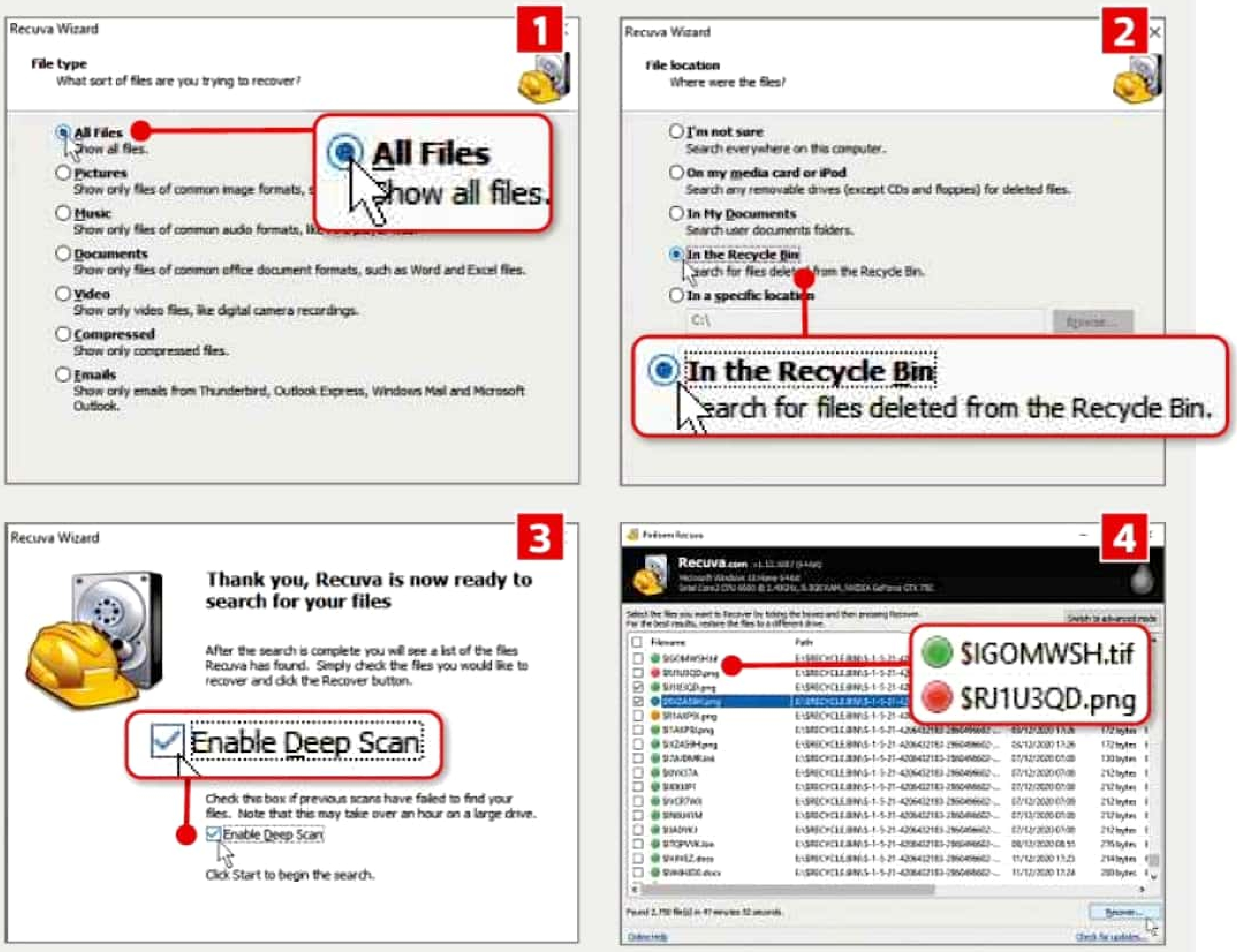
**Q** I don't make regular backups and have somehow deleted a folder that I'd like back, but realised I'd deleted it only after subsequently emptying the Recycle Bin. Can the files be retrieved?

**Tad Stenzel**

**A** Possibly, but it's pretty unlikely. The free Recuva tool (www.snipca.com/37052) can identify and restore deleted files and folders – even those banished from the Recycle Bin – but the more the PC is used between the original deletion and the recovery attempt, the slimmer the chance of success.

Still, you've nothing to lose by trying, so fire up Recuva, then select All files 1 followed by Next. Now choose 'In the Recycle Bin' 2 followed by Next. Tick the Enable Deep Scan box 3 then click Start and cross your fingers.

Any files that Recuva finds will be listed 4. Retrievable items are indicated by a green dot, but those with an amber or red dot are probably lost causes. Tick the relevant files and then click Recover. Choose a destination and then click OK.



1

Recuva Wizard

**File type**
What sort of files are you trying to recover?

● All Files
Show all files.
○ Pictures
Show only files of common image formats, s
○ Music
Show only files of common audio formats, lik
○ Documents
Show only files of common office document formats, such as Word and Excel files.
○ Video
Show only video files, like digital camera recordings.
○ Compressed
Show only compressed files.
○ Emails
Show only emails from Thunderbird, Outlook Express, Windows Mail and Microsoft Outlook.

2

Recuva Wizard

**File location**
Where were the files?

○ I'm not sure
Search everywhere on this computer.
○ On my media card or iPod
Search any removable drives (except CDs and floppies) for deleted files.
○ In My Documents
Search user documents folders.
● In the Recycle Bin
Search for files deleted from the Recycle Bin.
○ In a specific location
C:\

3

Recuva Wizard

**Thank you, Recuva is now ready to search for your files**

After the search is complete you will see a list of the files Recuva has found. Simply check the files you would like to recover and click the Recover button.

Check this box if previous scans have failed to find your files. Note that this may take over an hour on a large drive.
☑ Enable Deep Scan

Click Start to begin the search.

**Use Recuva to search and scan for discarded files in the Recycle Bin**

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

# Types of RGB lighting?

**Q** I've been looking to buy a new laptop, for work and gaming. I've been comparing models from Razer, Asus and MSI. The choice is a bit overwhelming but I understand that I need to go for the best processor, memory and graphics that I can afford. All these companies offer models with colourful lighting using RGB LEDs, mostly in the keyboards it seems. What I don't understand is what the differences are, and whether or not it matters?

**Mark Watson**

Setting up customised gaming keyboard and mouse colour controls in Chroma

**A** Ignoring physical layouts of the RGB LEDs and the specific illumination patterns they create, the differences boil down to branding and the size (or otherwise) of what the companies call the 'ecosystem' – or compatible RGB-equipped gadgets.

Razer calls its RGB system Chroma, while Asus dubs its version Aura. MSI's is Mystic Light. Razer's control app is called Synapse, while Asus has Armoury Crate, and MSI, Dragon Center. All also offer software developers' kits (SDKs) that allow other firms to hook into the various ecosystems, but this broader support is limited.

If you're buying only a laptop, then it doesn't matter which of these systems you end up with: any one of them will serve up a variety of twinkly effects across the laptop's keyboard, lid or any other area where the manufacturer has fitted some RGB lights.

But, if you're buying more RGB-equipped kit – such as a mouse or monitor, say – then this is where the particular ecosystem matters. Syncing light across equipment from the same manufacturer is pretty straightforward, but it's much trickier (or even impossible) when pairing kit from different manufacturers. In other words, getting a Razer Chroma laptop to sync with an Asus Aura mouse, for example, is not for the faint-hearted.

There are 'unofficial' third-party tools that can help bring these incompatible ecosystems together – such as the free AuraConnect (www.snipca.com/37057), which helps to interconnect some Aura and Chroma products – but for the simple life and guaranteed compatibility, you'd need to stick to syncing gear from the same company.

✉ Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

# Why did my iPhone sound like a fire alarm?

**Q** While walking down the street, my handbag started making a loud noise, like a fire alarm! Startled, I rummaged inside but the noise stopped. I realised that it must have been my ageing iPhone 6, because it was the only electronic thing in the bag. However, there was nothing on the screen and I've never heard it make this sound before. I'm now wondering if I imagined it. What do you think?

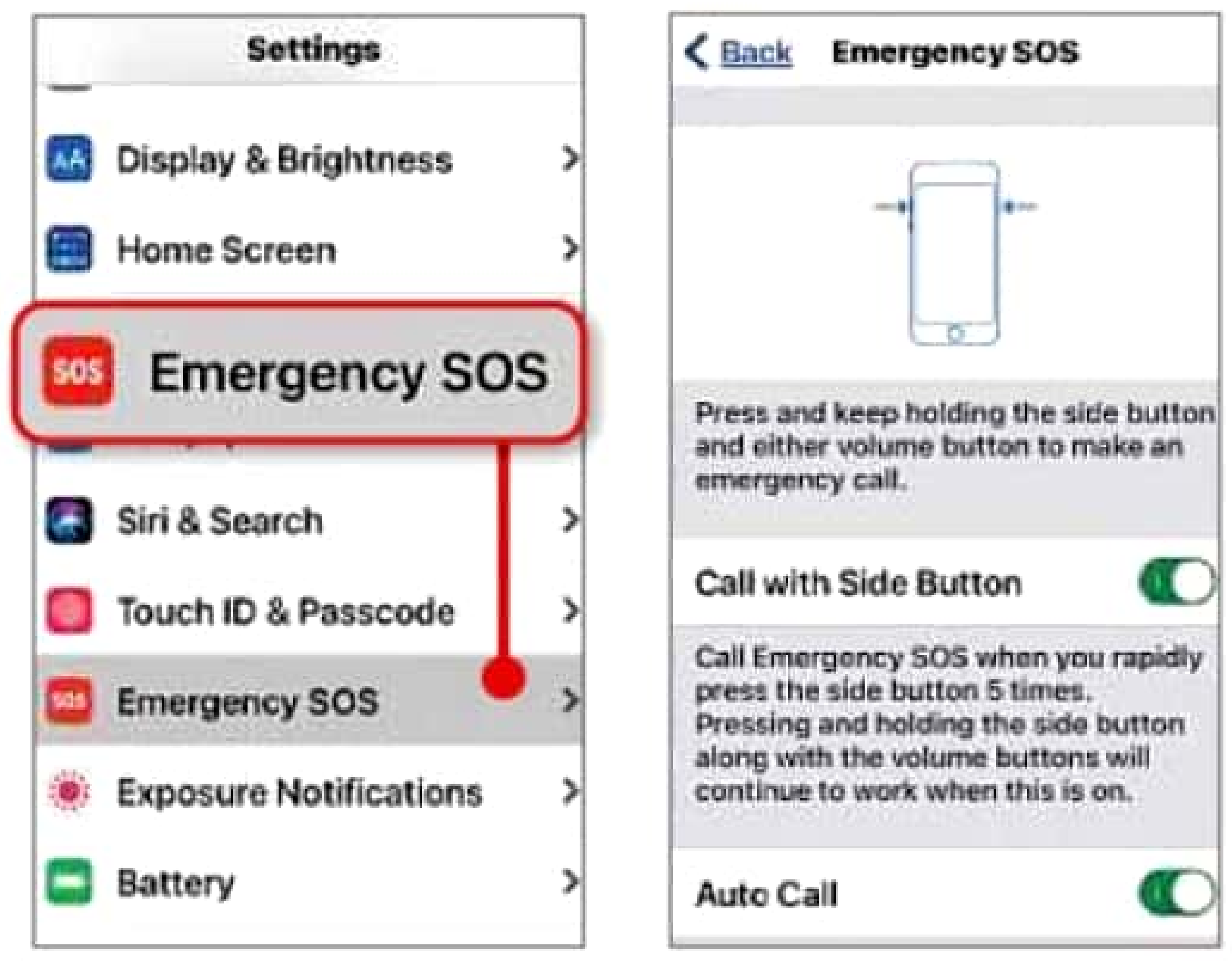
**Alison Heath**

**A** It sounds like rhythmic movements induced by your stroll managed to trigger your iPhone's Emergency SOS feature. The idea is that it allows you to secretly place a call to the emergency services, without having to look at or touch the screen.

From the iPhone 8 and onwards, that's achieved by holding down both the physical power button and either volume button, for a few seconds. On earlier models – such as your iPhone 6 – it requires five successive taps on the handset's physical power button to summon the feature.

By default this feature acknowledges the completion of that button sequence by emitting a warble just like you describe, as a warning that a short countdown has commenced before your phone dials 999. If you happened to grab the phone before it did this, you may have fortuitously pressed the on-screen Stop button, silencing it.

So, we think that's the chain of events that probably occurred here. To disable this feature – or modify how it works, including silencing the alert – first launch Settings, then scroll down to find and tap Emergency SOS (see screenshots left).



Press and keep holding the side button and either volume button to make an emergency call.

Call with Side Button

Call Emergency SOS when you rapidly press the side button 5 times. Pressing and holding the side button along with the volume buttons will continue to work when this is on.

Auto Call

You can switch off or change how Emergency SOS works in the iPhone's Settings

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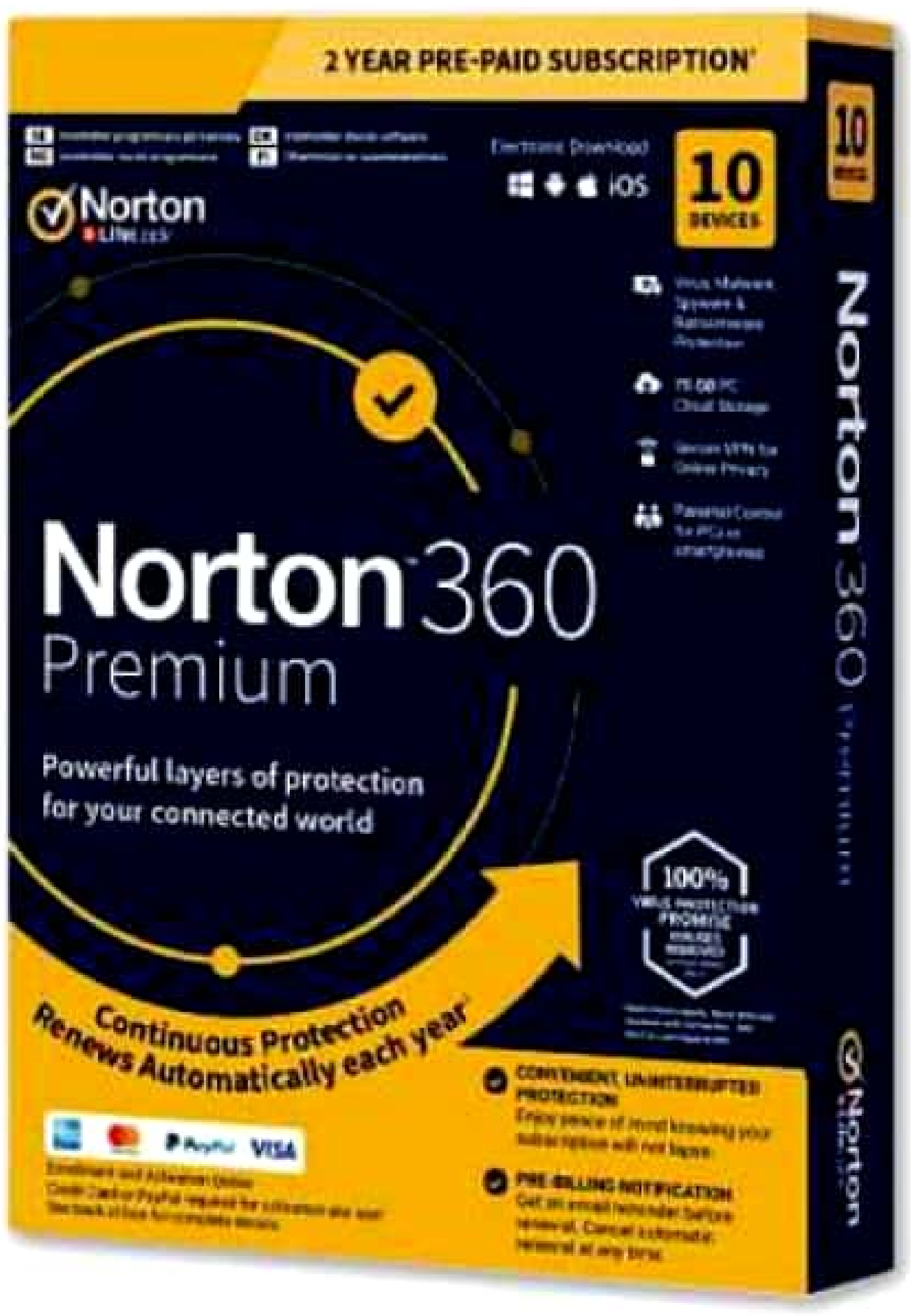
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# Problems **Solved**

# Reader Support

Having a problem with our recommended software or expert tips? Email **editor@computeractive.co.uk** and we'll do our best to help

## Where are my nearby walking routes?

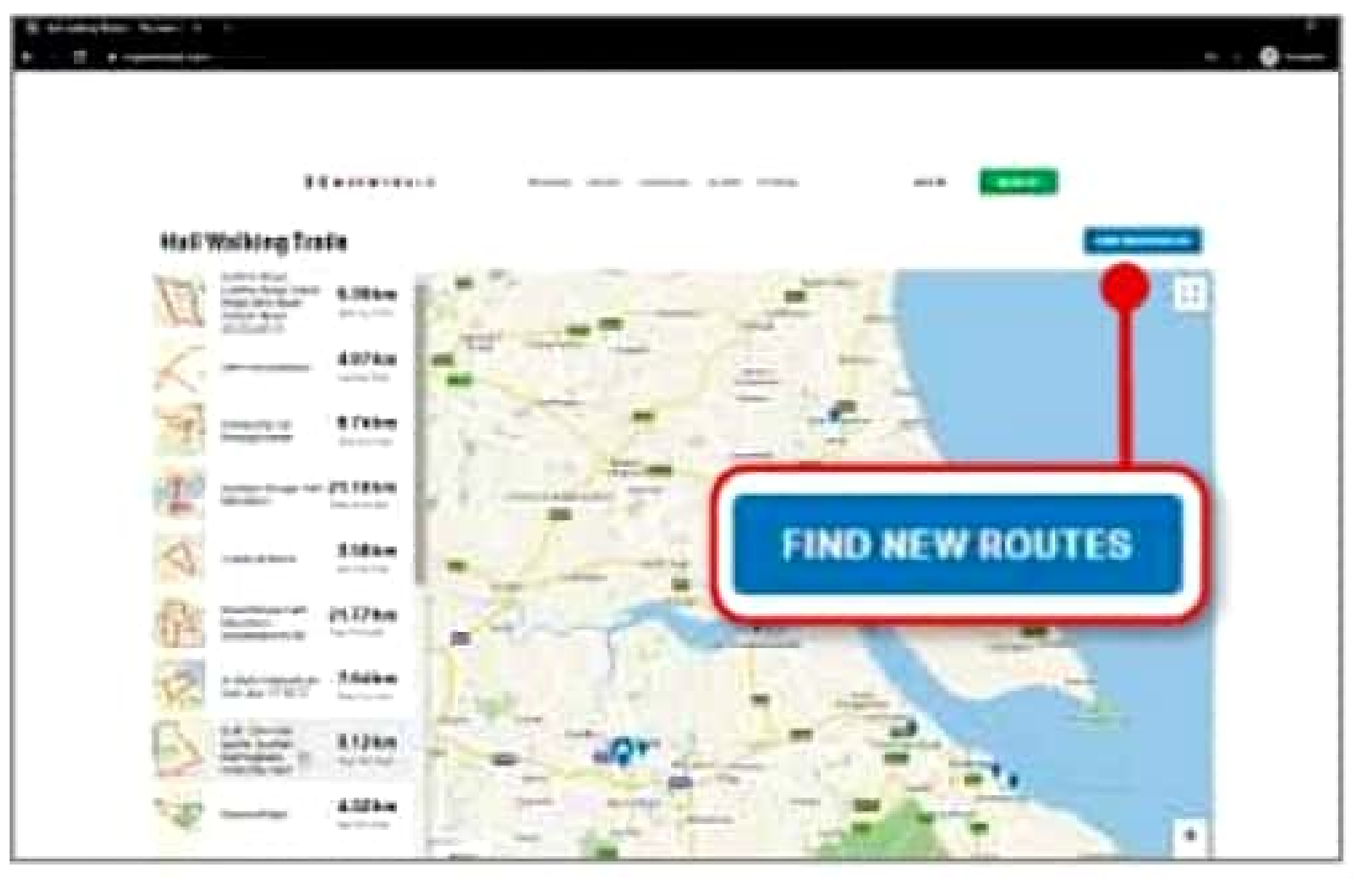
**Q** I had MapMyWalk on my Android phone, though I've never found it helpful. I was therefore intrigued to learn from Issue 596's Best Apps For Walkers panel, on page 45, that it offered "dozens of new circular and point-to-point walks", so I took another look. But my version offers no such walks. When I select Routes from the menu, I get only two tabs: MyRoutes and Bookmarked. I don't see the Nearby tab that appears in your screenshot. Thinking there might be a new version, I reinstalled the app, but nothing changed. Am I doing something wrong?

**Roger Hughes**

**A** No you're not, and this problem mystified us too – so we contacted developer Under Armour to ask what was going on.

The company's support staff told us that it has now removed this feature, along with the Route Genius tool, because they were "not performing up to [the firm's] expected standards". Instead, it now suggests that users look up walking routes via the relevant Find a City page of its website, which for the UK is at www.mapmywalk.com/gb (see screenshot below). That works, after a fashion, but the Nearby tab was far easier because it was actually built into the app.

We find this a bizarre decision. Unfortunately, this update to MapMyWalk happened shortly after Issue 596 went on sale, so there was nothing we could've done to alter our recommendations.



The MapMyWalk site has a 'Find New Routes' option, but the app's Nearby tab was better

## Where's my Tray Radio icon?

**Q** In Issue 595's 'Best new software you should've downloaded in 2020' feature, you recommend a program called Tray Radio. I visited www.snipca.com/36729, downloaded it and chose to have an icon on my Windows Desktop. If I double-click on this icon it says the program is running. But how do I use the program, because it doesn't display as an app on the desktop? I opened task manager and went to Settings. This showed that Tray Radio was set to off, so it would not show in the notification area, as you suggested. I then turned off the option to show all icons on the taskbar and turned only Tray Radio on and then rebooted the PC, but I still didn't get an icon in the notification area. I've uninstalled and reinstalled Tray Radio with the same result. Any ideas?

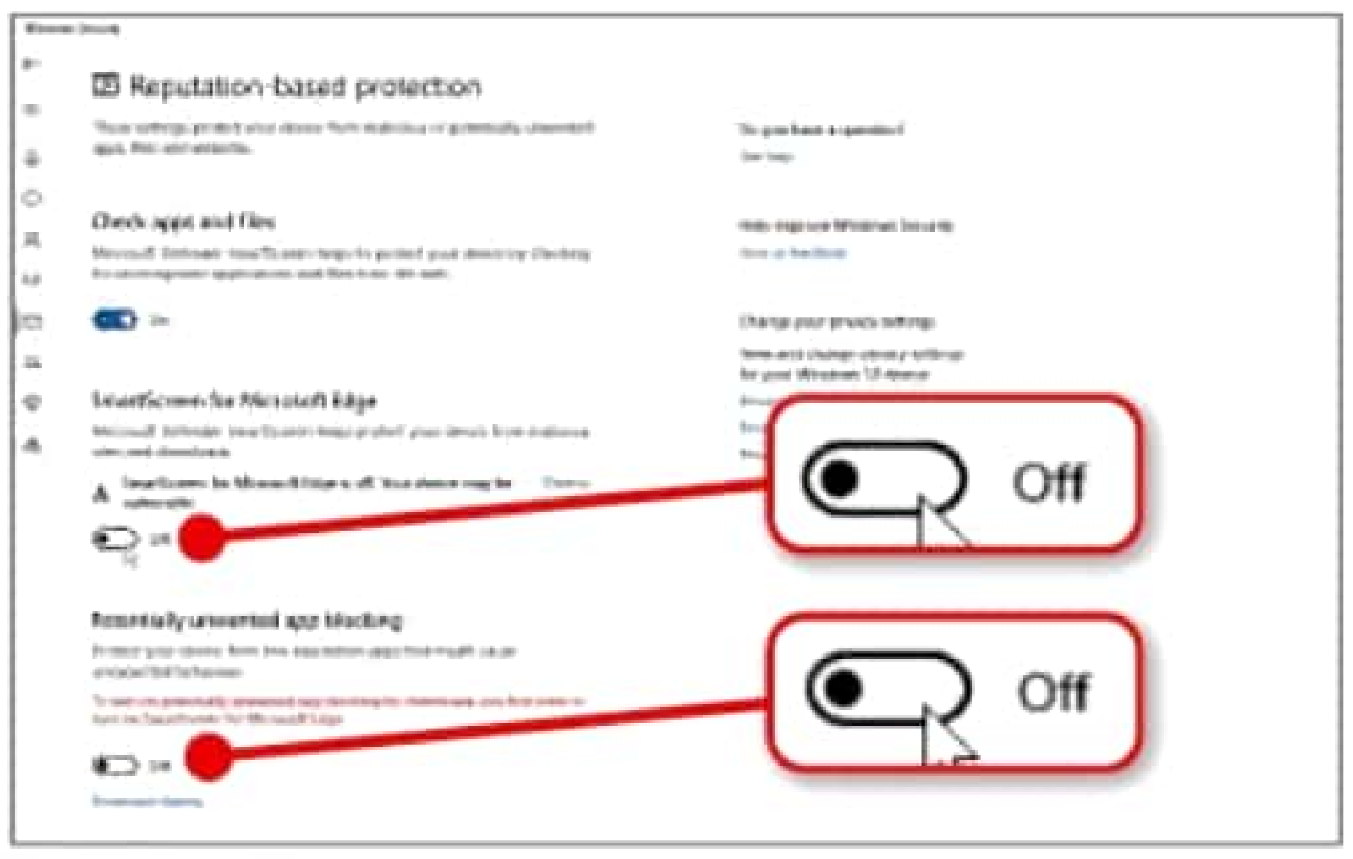
**Dave Carlile**

**A** Not many, being honest. We've installed Tray Radio on half-a-dozen PCs without any problems.

However, one red flag is that you wrote you'd "turned off the option to show all icons on the taskbar". This is because in Windows 10 it is labelled 'Always show all icons in the notification area', but in Windows 7 it's labelled 'Always show all icons and notifications on the taskbar'.

It's a subtle difference, but one that makes us think you might still be using Windows 7. If that's the case then that may be the beginning, middle and end of this story: Tray Radio's developer points out that, while the program will "probably" work on older versions of Windows, there is no guarantee that it will. Moreover, there's also no support for the product on Windows 7 or 8/8.1, so there's likely no fix for this problem.

However, we're happy to publish your query in case other readers have met this hiccup and have found a way to fix it.



Prevent SmartScreen warnings about safe downloads by switching these settings off

## Is FlightGear unsafe?

**Q** I wanted to download FlightGear, as recommended in Issue 595's Best Free Software section. However, I got a message saying: 'Flightgear 2020.3.4.exe was blocked because it could harm your device'. I therefore did not proceed. Can you advise as to the safety of this .exe download?

**Paul Nuttall**

**A** This message is generated by the Edge web browser, but it's driven by an underlying technology in Windows Security called SmartScreen. This steps in to stop you downloading files that are actually dangerous but also some that are merely considered by Microsoft to have a 'low reputation' – meaning not many people have downloaded that particular file.

A new version of a specialist program like FlightGear will sometimes trigger a false positive, so that's what's happening here. If you leave it a few days then the reputation of the latest version will typically improve enough to pass the SmartScreen filter.

Alternatively, you can just disable the protection – temporarily or permanently. To do this, click Settings, 'Update & Security', then Windows Security. Next, click 'App & browser control' followed by 'Reputation-based protection settings'. Finally, under both the 'SmartScreen for Microsoft Edge' and 'Potentially unwanted app blocking' headings, flip the switches to Off (see screenshot above).

# Jargon **Buster**

**1080p** Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

**32bit/64bit** A measure of how much data a PC can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit, more modern ones are 64bit.

**3G/4G/5G** Technologies that deliver faster mobile broadband.

**4K** Video with a resolution of at least 3840x2160 pixels.

**720p** A common resolution of high-definition video: 1280x720 pixels.

**802.11ac** A standard for wireless networks that allows for much higher transfer speeds than **802.11n**.

**802.11ax** Wi-Fi standard with speeds up to 10 times faster than 802.11ac. Also called Wi-Fi 6.

**Add-on** A program that adds extra features to your browser.

**ADSL** Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line. A technology that converts a standard phone line into a broadband internet connection.

**aptX** A codec used to compress audio so it can be transmitted over Bluetooth with minimal loss in quality.

**Bandwidth** A measure of how much data can be transferred through a connection at one time.

**Benchmarking** Comparing software and products with an accepted standard.

**Beta** A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

**BIOS** Basic Input-Output System. Software built into every PC that connects the vital components. It's visible for a few seconds when the PC starts.

**Bitrate** A measure of data transfer speed, or of the quality of digital video or audio files.

**Bricked** To damage beyond repair a device making it completely unusable.

**cd/m²** Candela per square metre. Standard unit of brightness.

**Clean install** An operating system installation that overwrites all other content on the hard drive.

**Client** A program that acts as an interface between PC and server.

**Codec** Short for Compressor/Decompressor. A file that tells a computer how to record or play a type of media file.

**Contrast ratio** A measure of the difference between the darkest and lightest possible shades shown by a screen. Screens with higher contrast ratios are good for watching movies or playing games.

**Core** Units on a processor that carry out program instructions.

**Decoding** Converting one file format into a simpler format that's easily understood and played back by other systems.

**Delta E** A measurement that shows how the human eye perceives different colours.

**DHCP** Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol. A system where one device on a network, normally the router, distributes network addresses to the others on request.

**DIMM** Dual Inline Memory Module. An older standard for computer memory modules.

**DirectX** A Microsoft technology required to run many games in Windows.

**DisplayPort** A new socket for connecting monitors.

**DNS** Domain Name System. A technology that associates computers with their addresses on the internet.

**DOS** Disk Operating System. DOS was the predecessor to Windows.

**dpi** Dots per inch. A measure of printed image quality, or the size an object will be shown on screen.

**Driver** A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

**Dual boot** To set up a PC with two operating systems, so that one must be chosen each time it starts.

**DVI-D** Digital Visual Interface. A common type of display connector that can carry a digital signal.

**DVI-I** A DVI-I connector can send out both a digital and an analogue signal.

**EXE** A program file designed to run in Windows. Has the file extension .exe.

**exFAT** Extended File Allocation Table. Microsoft's file system for USB sticks and SD cards.

**False positive** When an antivirus program wrongly detects a malware infection.

**Favicon** A small icon for a website, usually appearing in the address and bookmark bars of a web browser.

**Fps** Frames per second, normally used to indicate gaming performance.

**Frame rate** The number of still images, or frames, shown per second to create a moving image. Higher frame rates make games appear smoother and more realistic.

**GEDCOM** Short for Genealogical Data Communication. A file format used by genealogy programs to share data.

**Geekbench 5** A test for measuring processor speed.

**GHz** Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second. 1GHz is equal to 1,000MHz.

**Graphics card** A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

**HDMI** High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

**Hotspot** A public area covered by a Wi-Fi network that allows you to access the internet, either free or for a fee.

**IP address** Internet Protocol address. A unique set of numbers used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

**IPS** A screen technology. Monitors that use it have wider viewing angles and better, more accurate-looking colours than monitors that do not use this technology.

**ISO file** A type of image file that contains all the data from a CD or DVD.

**JPEG** Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras. Some image quality is lost with each save.

**LAN** Local-area network. A computer network in one place, such as a home or office.

**LCD** Liquid-crystal display. The technology used to create almost all flatscreen monitors.

**LED** Light-emitting diode. An electronic device that emits light. Used on almost all electronic devices, and to provide the backlight for some LCDs.

**MAC** Migration Authorisation Code. This can be requested from your old ISP when moving to a new one.

**Macro lens** Lets you take sharp, detailed, close-up photos of small objects.

**Manhattan 3** A test that measures the performance of graphics cards.

**Metadata** A set of data that gives information about a file.

**MicroSD card** A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

**Network switch** A device that connects computers in a network.

**Noise** Visible dust-like speckles that appear in some camera and TV images. In photos, they are caused by the camera's own sensor. In TV images, they can be caused by the TV's processor or by a flaw in the broadcast signal itself.

**Open source** Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by the employees of the company that created it.

**PCIe** Peripheral Component Interconnect Express. A faster version of PCI - a slot on the motherboard for expansion cards.

**Plug-in** A small program that adds extra features to software or to your web browser.

**POP** Post Office Protocol. A system for remotely accessing email from an ISP.

**PNG** Portable Network Graphics. A format for images that shrinks file sizes using compression but without discarding any data.

**ppi** Pixels per inch. Measure of screen resolution.

**QR code** Quick Response code. A barcode that can be read using smartphones and dedicated QR-reading devices.

**RAM** Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on.

**Refresh rate** Measured in Hertz (Hz), the number of times per second that the image on your monitor is redrawn. Slight changes in the image each time it is updated combine to give the illusion of movement.

**RGB image** A colour picture created on a monitor, by combining a value for red, green and blue channels to determine the colour of each individual pixel.

**Root** To perform tasks on Android devices that aren't permitted by the manufacturer.

**SATA** Serial ATA. An interface for connecting hard drives and optical discs to a computer.

**SD card** Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

**SDK** Software developers kit. A collection of tools that let developers build software.

**Source code** Program instructions written in a high-level language that are readable by people but not computers.

**sRGB** A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors, printers and the internet.

**SSD** Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

**System restore point** The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

**Temporary file** A file created by a browser to store website data.

**Ultra HD** Ultra high definition. Resolution of 3840x2160.

**USB 2.0/3.0/3.1/3.2** Faster successors to USB.

**USB-C** A new connector that's reversible, letting you plug it in upside down.

**VGA** Video Graphics Array. An older standard socket for connecting a monitor to a computer.

**Virtual machine** A software-based computer running inside another computer. Often used to emulate another operating system – for example, running Windows 7 inside Windows 10.

**Volume** An alternative term for drive or disk.

**VPN** Virtual private network. Keeps all internet communication safe and private.

**Wi-Fi 6** See 802.11ax.

**ZIP file** A file that contains compressed documents or files.

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# Easy when you Know How

Seeking a smart replacement for his old business card, **Robert Irvine** tries to...

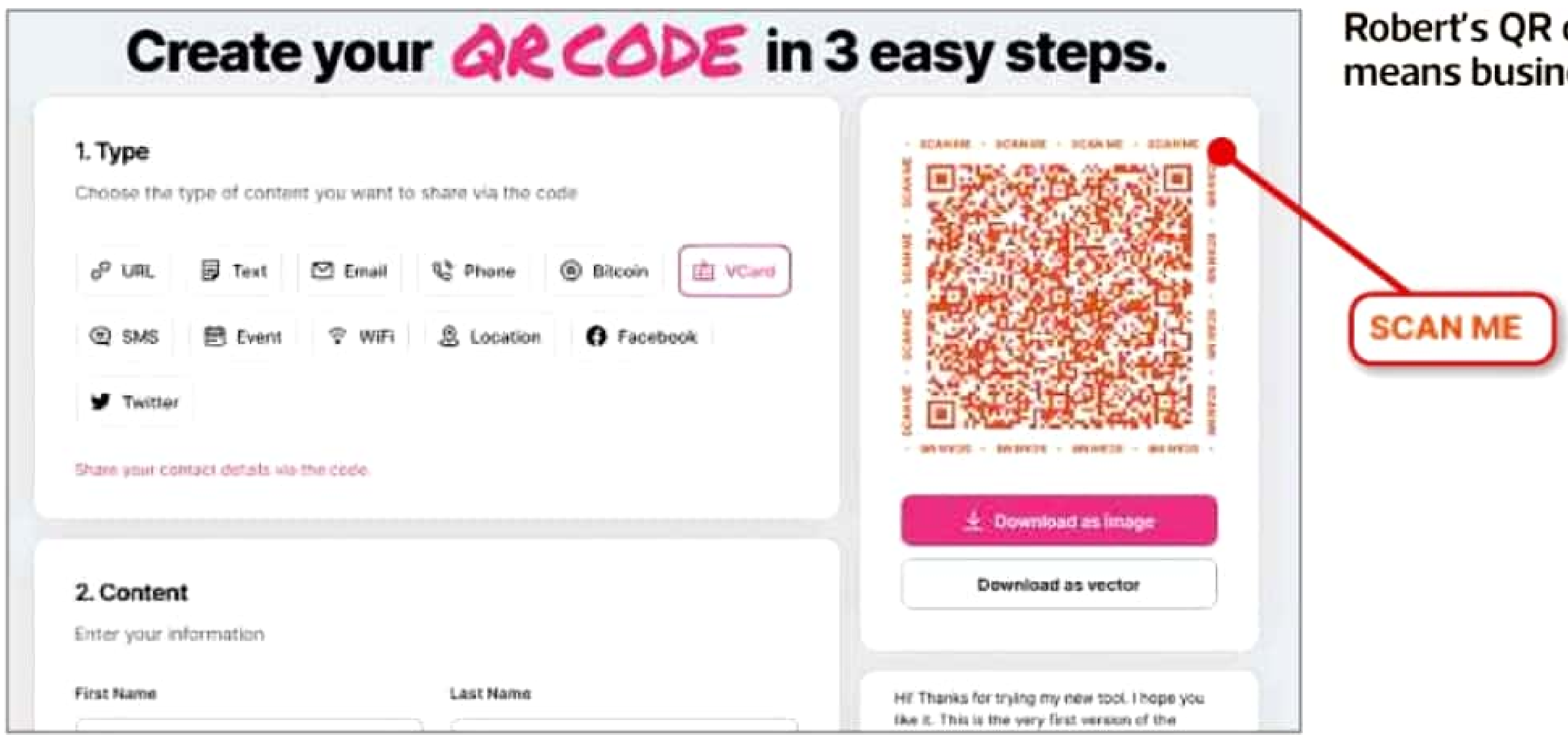
# Create his own QR code

One thing I miss about those halcyon days between the lockdowns is checking into venues with my phone. Call me shallow, but I found it strangely satisfying to scan a QR code through the NHS COVID-19 app and be told: "Thank you, you have now checked in". I collected these check-ins like a trainspotter jotting down the serial numbers of locomotives, although the limited extent of my social (and socially distanced) activities last year meant this only amounted to a handful.

I also noticed that many bars and restaurants were now using QR codes to provide contactless menus. It's clear that the technology has made a big comeback during the pandemic, along with board games, home baking and *Mr Blue Sky* by the Electric Light Orchestra (see www.snipca.com/37104).

So when I started thinking about a new business card – as my boxes of '*Web User* Editor' designs are now sadly redundant – using a trendy QR code seemed like an obvious choice. Not only would this let me link to contact details that could be updated as required, but it could be shared in both physical and digital formats.

Rather than typing my email address, website URL or mobile number manually, interested parties could simply scan the code with their phone's camera to access the information instantly. Alternatively – or even additionally, let's go wild! – I could link to my online portfolio, my LinkedIn profile or a video of me pleading for a job.



1. Type

Choose the type of content you want to share via the code

Share your contact details via the code.

2. Content

Enter your information

Hi! Thanks for trying my new tool. I hope you like it. This is the very first version of the

Robert's QR code means business

> QR codes have made a comeback during the pandemic, along with board games and home baking

A quick Google search for "free QR code generator" yielded hundreds of thousands of results, including web-based tools, desktop software and Android and iOS apps. After dismissing sites that looked too basic, too complicated, too ad-stuffed or – on seeing a red security warning – too dangerous, I found a simple but smart (and safe) generator called Fast QR Code (https://fastqrcode.com). This promised to let me create a code in "three easy steps" and being a fan of the 'no fuss, no muss' approach (whatever 'muss' means), it seemed perfect for my needs.

The first step was to choose a QR code type from the dozen options offered by Fast QR Code. These include URL, calendar event, Wi-Fi network, Google Maps location and cryptocurrency payment, but the one I needed was VCard. Selecting this moved me to the second step, which was to enter my name, email and postal address, landline and mobile numbers, and other contact info. The State and ZIP code fields suggest Fast QR Code is a US website, but inputting a county and postcode instead didn't produce any errors.

Indeed, as I typed, a big QR code was automatically generated on the right-hand side of the page. But there was still another step to go, which involved customising the colour and layout of my code. Why settle for a boring black square containing a load of pixelated gubbins, when you can have an orange one framed with a border reading 'Scan Me * Scan Me * Scan Me' (see screenshot above)?

With my code complete, I clicked the pink 'Download as image' button to save it to my PC as a PNG file. The image was huge – 1,200 x 1,200 pixels – so I halved its size using the brilliant free image editor IrfanView (www.irfanview.com). I then tested the code by scanning it with the QR Scanner app (www.snipca.com/37105) on my Android phone. Almost immediately, my VCard and contact details appeared on screen, so the code worked perfectly. I was now free to share it as an email attachment, post it online or print it on a business card, so that the job offers would come flooding in. Eventually, anyway.

**QR codes can be used to share contact details, web pages, videos and much more**

Need help configuring your own QR code? Let us know: noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

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